

**British Attitudes to the French Revolutionary Wars,
1792-1802**

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Abstract

The responses of British people to the French Revolution have recently received considerable scholarly interest. Their views on the ensuing wars have been much less well covered, however, and this thesis seeks to provide a wide-ranging examination of these. Using government and parliamentary papers, pamphlet literature, printed ephemera, printed and manuscript letters, novels, poetry, newspapers, periodicals and graphic satires, the thesis considers the attitudes of various groups of people to the conflict. It attempts to highlight the debate in England and Scotland provoked by the war, both as distinct from the polemic on the French Revolution itself and, more substantially, as the sequel to the Revolution debate, though integrally linked to it. This debate concerned the grounds, aims, nature and conduct of the war, the issues surrounding negotiations for peace with France, and especially the effects of the conflict on British society.

Groups of people across the whole political spectrum took part in the controversy. Edmund Burke's views were crucial to its development, and the thesis begins with a discussion of his analysis. Succeeding chapters examine the attitudes of various political groups. The second chapter studies the opinions of members of the government (particularly those of Pitt, Grenville and Dundas) and of George III. This is followed by a chapter on the war-time activities and attitudes of loyalists inside and outside Parliament and of the 'war crusaders' (those conservatives who sympathized with Burke's interpretation of events, such as the government pamphleteer John Bowles). The next two chapters consider the opposition to the war: the Foxite Whigs in Parliament and their supporters, and radical politicians and 'Friends of Peace' out-of-doors. Each of these four chapters is to some extent organized around a coherent and unified view of the war, but the thesis attempts to show the dialogue within each group as well as their disagreements with other groups. The debate on the war also took place at various social levels, and at many levels of sophistication, and the three final chapters consider the discussion within particular social groups. The theological and political-theological responses of ministers of both Established and Dissenting churches in England and Scotland are examined; the roles and views of women during the war are investigated, particularly focusing on the perceptions expressed by female writers of the decade; while the last chapter deals with the attitudes of the ordinary people of Britain and the role of public opinion in the debate on the war against Revolutionary France.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis has been composed entirely by myself, that it is a record of my own work, and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a Higher Degree.

Emma Vincent, March 1995.

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Acknowledgements

During the course of my research for this thesis I wrote and published two articles: “‘The Real Grounds of the Present War’: John Bowles and the Wars Against Revolutionary France, 1792-1802’ (*History*, 78 (1993)) and ‘The Responses of Scottish Churchmen to the French Revolution, 1789-1802’ (*Scottish Historical Review*, 73 (1994)). Neither essay is included as a component part of the thesis, but both allowed me to explore narrower aspects of its subject in greater detail than the remits of a thesis permit. I am indebted to the editors and anonymous readers of *History* and the *Scottish Historical Review* for their encouragement and helpful comments. I should also like to thank the staffs of Edinburgh University Library, the National Library of Scotland, the British Library, the Public Record Office, the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and Cambridge University Library, for their experience and assistance over the past four years.

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Abbreviations

Sources are cited in full in the footnotes the first time they are referred to; thereafter they are cited by their authors' surnames and shortened titles. Full references may be found in the bibliography at the end, but the most frequent abbreviations are also listed here for ease of reference.

<i>A-JR</i>	<i>The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine</i>
BL Add. MSS	British Library Additional Manuscripts
BMC	British Museum, English Cartoons and Satirical Prints 1320-1832. Numbers refer to those set by F.G. Stephens and M.D. George, <i>Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires Preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum</i> (11 vols.: London, 1870-1954).
<i>Burke Corr.</i>	Thomas W. Copeland et al. (eds.), <i>The Correspondence of Edmund Burke</i> (10 vols.: Cambridge and Chicago, 1967-70)
<i>Dropmore</i>	Historical Manuscripts Commission, <i>Report on the Manuscripts of J.B. Fortescue, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore</i> (10 vols.: London, 1892-1927)
HO	Home Office
<i>LCGIII</i>	A. Aspinall (ed.), <i>The Later Correspondence of George III</i> (5 vols.: Cambridge, 1962-8)
<i>Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence</i>	Third Earl of Malmesbury (ed.), <i>Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury</i> (4 vols.: London, 1844)
NMM	National Maritime Museum, Greenwich

<i>PH</i>	William Cobbett (ed.), <i>The Parliamentary History of England, From the Earliest Period to the Year 1803</i> (London, 1806-1820)
PRO	Public Record Office
WO	War Office

Introduction

On 12 February 1793 the British Prime Minister, William Pitt, informed the House of Commons that the revolutionary government of France had declared war on Great Britain and its ally, the United Provinces. The news was not unexpected, for, although Britain had responded with strict neutrality to the French conflict against the Austrian Empire and Prussia which had begun in spring 1792, and had made strenuous efforts to preserve this stance, British alarm over the French abolition of the monarchy in August 1792 had developed into mutual suspicion and rising tension between the two countries by November. By January 1793 it was clear that patience on both sides was wearing thin and that attempts to reach an understanding were vain. Brissot and the revolutionary rulers of France claimed that the corrupt court of George III was leading Britain into the European war of tyrants and despots against the French Republic; this must be met with military force and the Republic itself must become an armed camp, dedicated to fighting tyranny on behalf of all the oppressed peoples in Europe, including those of Great Britain.¹ The communications between the two governments over the past months had similarly failed to dispel the fears of the Pitt administration regarding a French threat to British security and European stability, fears which had arisen in the wake of French decrees of fraternity with the 'oppressed peoples' of Europe and of military intervention, annexations of territory to the Republic and the opening of the River Scheldt to international navigation. These appeared to be clear indications of the Republic's menace towards the Low Countries which, in the eyes of the British government, were tantamount to a direct challenge to Great Britain. 'The psychology of Revolution renders difficult the maintenance of peace with neighbouring States of the old type,' wrote J. Holland Rose. 'Suspicion and aversion naturally set in; and these are the parents of war.'²

It has been shown that the French Revolution produced widespread and lasting effects in its impact upon Britain in many spheres.³ The polarization of British

¹ J.T. Murley, 'The Origins and Outbreak of the Anglo-French War of 1793', unpublished D. Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 1959), p.503.

² J. Holland Rose, 'The Struggle with Revolutionary France 1792-1802', in A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch (eds.), *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, vol. i (1922), p.216.

³ See, for instance, the essays in H.T. Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (London, 1989). On the Revolution debate in Britain, see also idem., *British Radicalism and the French Revolution* (Oxford, 1985); Thomas Philip Schofield, 'English Conservative Thought and Opinion in Response to the French Revolution 1789-1796', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University College, London, 1984); Yang Su Hsien, 'The British Debate on the French Revolution: Edmund Burke and His Critics', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1989); Mark Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991); Gregory Claeys, 'The French Revolution Debate and British Political Thought', *History of Political Thought*, xi (1990), 59-80.

opinions on the Revolution and its consequences began slowly to crystallize after the publication of Richard Price's lecture, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, in January 1790 and Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November 1790. Over the next two years many replies were published to Burke's pamphlet,⁴ which had argued that the French Revolution was an evil plot of massive dimensions directed against not only all the monarchies of Europe but the whole European moral and social order, and that it was a dire threat which must be combatted. Questions were raised of sovereignty and legitimacy, of the civil liberties and the natural rights of men and women, of absolute and relative truths and values, and of the adequacy of the British constitution itself. The passion of the polemics and the breadth of their application ensured that the debate was not purely literary and philosophical, but also political; and that it was not restricted to the traditional governing and literary classes of society. Popular societies and clubs had sprung up nationwide on both sides of the ideological divide before war was declared even between France and Austria in April 1792, such as the radical Constitutional Societies and the resurgent conservative Church and King clubs.⁵

Nevertheless, the outbreak of war between Britain and France in February 1793, in its more direct impact upon the British population, heralded the debate of problems of still greater political complexity. The war was to last for twenty-two years except for the truce of Amiens in 1802-3, and it was to involve a greater proportion of the British population than any previous international conflict had done. It therefore demanded a reponse of some sort from an even wider cross-section of the nation than had the Revolution. War against France in the 1790s did not merely add another layer of intensity to the debate on the French Revolution. New questions were fired at an alarming rate at ministers reeling from the enormity of international events and their domestic repercussions, and these were heatedly discussed inside and outside Parliament. These questions, concerning the causes of the war, and its purposes, nature, conduct and impact upon both Britain and France, inextricably complicated the previous debate on the Revolution and inexorably pulled it into a whole new orientation. This thesis is an examination of the responses of different individuals and groups of people to the conflict and the questions that it posed for them.

The scale of the warfare in which Britain found itself engaged was unprecedented in terms of the human and material resources it required and in terms of its eventual duration. Between 1793 and 1815 Britain lost 315 000 men in the wars

⁴ Among the most famous were Thomas Paine, *Rights of Man* (Part I: London, 1791; Part II: London, 1792); Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* (London, 1791); and James Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae* (London, 1791).

⁵ See Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp.1-6.

and spent £1 500 million in loans and taxes.⁶ Such a conflict preoccupied British public thought; as William Windham put it, 'war seemed to have become the whole business of life'.⁷ The *Morning Chronicle* noted in August 1799 that 'a great deal of war-like science' had been called forth. 'No inconsiderable portion of our annual publications is occupied with treatises on military tactics, and sermons on public affairs, with instructions for the drill of horse and foot, and heart-stirring sounds from the ecclesiastical trumpet.' Gayle Trusdel Pendleton's evidence bears out this assertion, demonstrating that the war was by far the single most-discussed topic in political pamphlet literature between 1792 and 1802.⁸ Commentators of all opinions and backgrounds were impressed by a sense of the novelty and scale of the dimensions of the crisis. On the announcement in October 1801 of the signature of the preliminaries of peace, *The Times* declared that it had been 'a war which neither in its native character or object can be fitly compared with any scourge or calamity with which the earth has been visited, since the subversion of the Roman Empire, and the darkness of the middle ages'. Thomas Erskine, the Foxite MP and barrister, claimed that 'we were suddenly placed by the most extraordinary events in a new situation, both as it regarded our moral feelings as good men, and our prudence as enlightened members of civil life'.⁹

Support for and hostility to the war in the 1790s largely followed the division of opinion in the debate on the French Revolution; loyalists continued to support the government in its military conflict against France as well as in its ideological battle against foreign and domestic radicalism, while reformers and radicals usually opposed the conflict, because of their admiration for the Revolution and their distaste for war. This does not mean, however, that opinions on either side of the divide were uniform. 'We all unfortunately too well know,' wrote Francis Plowden, Foxite lawyer and writer, in 1794,

that at this moment we are engaged in a very bloody and desperate war with France; and yet neither in nor out of parliament can be found ten men who agree in the reasons, views, motives and objects of the war....so little are you at present able or willing to agree upon any one great and common point respecting the war that...there must

⁶ Colin Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France: Conflict, Subversion and Propaganda* (Exeter, 1983), p.9.

⁷ William Cobbett (ed.), *The Parliamentary History of England, From the Earliest Period to the Year 1803* (London, 1806-1820) [hereafter *P.H.*], xxxv, 1440, William Windham, 2 June 1801.

⁸ The *Morning Chronicle*, 3 August 1799; Gayle Trusdel Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda During the French Revolution, 1789-1802', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Emory University, 1976), p.443.

⁹ *The Times*, 3 October 1801; Thomas Erskine, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France* (3rd edition: London, 1797), p.134.

be a very thick mist or veil thrown over the circumstances, which are so misrepresented or withheld from our sight.¹⁰

This heterogeneity of opinion provoked the dialogue and was in turn perpetuated by it—an inter-genre debate carried on in government papers, parliamentary debates, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, the resolutions of societies and public meetings, sermons, novels, poetry and graphic prints, each reacting or replying to another. ‘As always,’ Norman Hampson has warned, ‘the historian must choose between generalizations which are never quite true in any specific instance and an incomprehensible anarchy of individual cases.’¹¹ Each chapter in this thesis seeks to show the dialogue within each group of people as well as their disagreements with other groups concerning the war.

Contemporaries recognized the French Revolutionary Wars as the first since the wars of religion to be fought over competing ideologies, and that in this lay the unusual nature of the conflict. This prompted questions concerning the nature of the conflict and therefore also its proper conduct, but it also raised the issue of the legitimacy of the British government’s involvement in the war. Conservative commentators thought it vital that Britain should range itself in armed conflict against the wicked forces of licence on the continent before they invaded Britain. Lord Mulgrave succinctly expressed a common view when he told the House of Lords in December 1794 that ‘the war which had been declared against us was no ordinary war; it was a war for the annihilation of our laws, our liberties, our prosperity, our civilization, and our religion.’¹² Those who were hostile to the war, on the other hand, often argued that it was illiberal to wage war against opinions and to force one nation’s views on constitutional government on another. Historians have disagreed concerning the extent to which the war was seen by contemporaries as being fundamentally ideological; one view recently expressed is that after 1795, with the fall of Robespierre and the rise of Directorial and, later, Napoleonic government in France, the war reverted to a traditional eighteenth-century type, no longer fuelled by partiality or hostility to a political ideology but fought simply for territorial prestige and economic gain.¹³ This issue is dealt with in chapter 2, but it may be noticed here that contemporaries were also divided on whether or not a ‘new era’ of the war had

¹⁰ Francis Plowden, *A Friendly and Constitutional Address to the People of Great Britain* (London, 1794), pp.3-5.

¹¹ Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment* (Harmondsworth, 1968; 1990), pp.129-30.

¹² *P.H.*, xxxi, 983, Lord Mulgrave, 30 December 1794.

¹³ Philip Schofield, ‘British Politicians and French Arms: the Ideological War of 1793-1795’, *History*, 77 (1992), 183-201.

begun by the middle of the decade.¹⁴ Radicals and liberals were affected by this question as much as conservatives: after Napoleon's invasion of Switzerland in 1798 and his *coup d'état* of 1799, some liberals withdrew their opposition to the war, since its aims could no longer be described as the overthrow of a true republican government.

After the breakdown of the Amiens settlement in 1803 the British displayed a much greater degree of united hostility towards the French under Napoleon than had been elicited in the 1790s. This thesis explores the more diverse attitudes to the conflict of different groups of British people in the 1790s. In so doing, it attempts to highlight the debate in England and Scotland provoked by the war, both as distinct from the polemic on the French Revolution itself and, more substantially, as the sequel to the Revolution debate, though integrally linked to it. The first five chapters deal with the spectrum of political opinion-groups and their reactions to the war. Edmund Burke's views were crucial to the development of the controversy on the war, as they had been to the debate on the French Revolution. He was the first in Britain publicly to advocate a war against revolutionary France, and this thesis begins with a discussion of his analysis. The two succeeding chapters examine the attitudes and war-related activities of those in favour of the armed struggle against France: those of the government and King George III, and those of loyalists inside and outside Parliament and the 'war crusaders' (those conservatives who sympathized with Burke's interpretation of events). Chapters 4 and 5 study the opposition to the war: the Foxite Whigs inside Parliament and their supporters, and radical politicians and 'Friends of Peace' out-of-doors. The next three chapters consider the discussion on the war that took place among various social groups. Chapter 6 examines the theological and political-theological responses of ministers of both Established and Dissenting churches in England and Scotland; chapter 7 investigates the roles and views of women during the conflict, particularly focusing on the perceptions expressed by female writers of the decade; and the final chapter deals with the attitudes of the ordinary people of Britain and the role of public opinion in the debate on the war against revolutionary France.

Clearly, such an organization of the material creates a certain degree of overlap. Chapter 2, for instance, which studies the attitudes of the government and the King, includes the views of such figures as Lord Auckland, Lord Malmesbury, the Marquess of Buckingham and Thomas Grenville, none of whom was a member of the administration. They have been included in this chapter, however, because they seem

¹⁴ See pp.65-8, 111-2.

to fit more usefully into a study of government attitudes than into one on loyalist attitudes, because of their personal closeness to members of the government or because of their executive role in the policy of the administration. The Marquess of Buckingham and Thomas Grenville were brothers of Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary.¹⁵ Lord Malmesbury, an ex-Foxite as was Thomas Grenville, committed himself to support of the war in 1793 and was sent on a diplomatic mission to Berlin in November of that year; in 1796 and 1797 he was the government's envoy in its negotiations for peace with the French Republic. Lord Auckland, another senior diplomat, was in addition a close personal friend of the Prime Minister. Chapters 4 and 5 together form a unit on the opposition to the war, in which there is further potential for overlap: Thomas Erskine, examined in chapter 4 as a staunch member of the Foxite party and opponent of the Pittite administration, might as helpfully have been included in chapter 5 as the author of one of the most successful pacifist pamphlets of the decade, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France* (1797). William Wilberforce is cited both in chapter 3, as a loyal supporter of Pitt and his government for most of the decade, and in chapter 5, as a prominent 'Friend of Peace' between December 1794 and spring 1796.

Revolutionary France may have declared war against Great Britain on 1 February 1793, but Edmund Burke had fired his own opening salvo against the French Revolution in November 1790, with the publication of his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. He hinted at the possible necessity for a war in the *Reflections*, and by January 1791 he was arguing that it was the only way to deal with the Revolution in France. By the summer of 1791 he was writing to members of the government, urging such a course of action upon them. He saw the French Revolution as a blatant attack on the basic foundations of European civilization, that is, on property and religion, and he feared both the spread of revolutionary ideas throughout Europe and into Britain, and their forcible propagation by French armies. So great was the danger posed by the evil political and moral doctrines of the French Revolution, according to Burke, that Britain and the other countries of Europe must be prepared to engage in a war to the death to destroy the appeal of these principles. The military defeat of the French armies was only a means to this end, in Burke's eyes, and the ideological character of the war seemed so important to him that he viewed it almost in the light of a spiritual battle. The first chapter examines Burke's publications, letters and speeches in order to understand his reasoning on the conflict

¹⁵ Thomas Grenville was a Foxite until the end of 1793, when he switched to support the government, as the Duke of Portland and others later did, because of his support for the war and his hostility towards domestic radicalism. See British Library Additional Manuscripts [hereafter BL Add. MSS] 47569 ff. 30-52, Thomas Grenville to Charles James Fox, 29 December 1793.

and its grounds, aims, nature and conduct. Despite his lack of direct influence on government policy, which frustrated him intensely, to a great extent Burke created the framework and polarization of the controversy on the war in Britain by the breadth, depth and vehemence of his arguments. This chapter therefore sets the scene for an examination of the rest of the debate.

The question of how far hostility towards the political ideology of revolutionary France motivated the government and the King in their attitudes to the war is a major theme of chapter 2. While Burke was, after the first few months of the French Revolution, intimidatingly sure of his views concerning it and concerning the nature and aims of a war against it, the ministry often appeared vague and even divided on these matters. Historians have therefore held differing interpretations of the parts played by political ideology and pragmatic power politics in establishing the British government's grounds for the war against revolutionary France and, among those who agree that ideological hostility was a significant factor at the beginning of the war, there is disagreement on how long it continued to play a significant part in the government's thinking. Official government policy and the sympathies of individual ministers and the King naturally often diverged, and both official and private attitudes changed over time as conditions at home and abroad fluctuated. This chapter examines the British government's thinking on the conflict and the different shades of opinion among ministers and the King, particularly focusing on William Pitt, Lord Grenville and Henry Dundas. Ministerial rhetoric and ministerial motivation, as T.C.W. Blanning has pointed out in examining the French grounds for the war, often differ:

Analysing motives is a notoriously imprecise and hazardous business. Even the individuals or groups of individuals concerned are often unaware of why they are *really* pursuing a certain course of action. Not only is the human capacity for self-deception eternal but politicians, in particular, appear to possess a special talent for believing their own rhetoric.¹⁶

It is argued here, however, that ideological issues and the more pragmatic issues of strategic interests were not so easily divided in the British government's thinking as historians have often assumed. Ministers were aware that French foreign policy in the 1790s was directed by a revolutionary government following revolutionary notions of international relations, which were unacceptable to the old governments of Europe and which threatened British strategic interests. This understanding affected both Britain's entry into the war and the government's subsequent reluctance to hold peace talks until the end of 1795. It also affected their

¹⁶ T.C.W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London, 1986), p.210.

conception of how France was fighting the war and the views of some ministers on how Britain ought to conduct its own war effort. It was recognized that France was fighting in a new way and some ministers, notably Windham, Grenville and Portland (and also George III), thought that Britain ought to be responding, if not in the same degree, then in kind. Furthermore, their fears concerning domestic radicalism induced ministers to look on the war in more than a pragmatic light: since the popular radical societies claimed to subscribe to the principles of the enemy, it was all the more necessary that they should be suppressed. While, however, Burke and the other 'war crusaders', together with some more militant loyalists, opposed the ideological basis of the French Revolution itself, it was the role of the British government to oppose the practical expression of that ideology, especially as it threatened the British state, rather than primarily the principles behind French revolutionary conduct.

The third chapter deals with the wartime conduct and opinions of those within Parliament and outside it who actively supported the government's struggle against the French revolutionaries, both 'loyalists' (those who generally supported government policy) and 'war crusaders' (those who campaigned for a more hardline, Burkean strategy and view of the war). It attempts to plot their attitudes along the spectrum of conservative thinking on the war, and to show how far they were influenced by government policy and by Burke's views. Loyalists tended to present the war as an ideological crusade, but they also defended the deviations of ministers from the logic of a strictly crusading strategy. They emphasized issues which were of most direct and immediate concern to the insular British public, and they paid less attention to matters of general European concern. Later in the war, some loyalists began to deny that it was any longer a conflict over political opinions and that it had become a struggle merely to tame French territorial greed. Others, however, continued to attack 'French opinions', being particularly concerned about the attraction that French democratic principles held for certain elements in British society. Loyalists allowed little of their desire for peace to show in their discussions of the issue, vigorously defending the necessity of the war and blaming the French for its continuance, except between 1796 and 1797 and after October 1801, when the ministry was attempting to negotiate a settlement with France. The loyalists were, however, almost always greatly relieved when ministers sought peace, and they defended them for doing so. Crusaders, on the other hand, looked with horror on the possibility of peace with revolutionary France. Like Burke, they were fixated by the principles of the French Revolution: French aggression abroad was only a symptom of these doctrines, and these were the principal danger to Britain and to European society in general. They must be crushed by overthrowing the French Revolutionary regime; peace with the

French Republic would leave Britain still more vulnerable to their insidious influence than it was during the war. Nevertheless, various of the most prominent crusaders were tied to the government by obligations of one kind or another, and they were less inflexible in their judgements on ministerial conduct of the war than was Burke.

The conflict against revolutionary France was actively opposed in a consistent way for three main reasons: party politics, political idealism and pacifism. While these motivations might overlap in the anti-war reasoning of any individual or group of people, the arguments of each of the three groups investigated in chapters 4 and 5 were predominantly characterized by one of them. Chapter 4 concentrates on the Foxite Whigs inside Parliament and their supporters outside it, who tended to be preoccupied by party political opposition to the conflict. By their attitudes to the secession of the Portland Whigs in 1794, to the French Revolution in general, and to the aims and conduct of the war, the Foxites showed themselves to be more concerned to defeat Pitt and his government than to preserve peace with France. This rather factious party spirit laid them open to charges of inconsistency when they sometimes tried to argue from principle and whenever the government began to negotiate for peace. It also made them vulnerable to accusations of disloyalty and sympathy with the French military effort.

Chapter 5 deals with the hostility to the war of radical politicians and the 'Friends of Peace'. Radicals opposed the war mainly because they supported the principles and declared aims and objectives of the French Revolution, and also because the conflict imposed great hardship on many ordinary people. Their arguments were more consistent than those of the Foxite Whigs and less tied to party politics, but opposition to the war was also a secondary concern for them. Whereas the Foxites used it as another context in which to oppose the Pitt administration and as another stick with which to beat the government's back, the radicals exploited the war to further their primary concern for parliamentary reform and, in particular, for the extension of the franchise. Although they continued to try to appropriate the character of 'true' patriots, associating themselves with the mythical history of Anglo-Saxon freedom and a Norman oppression continued still by the present governors of Britain, the radicals lost support during the war, because they had gained a pro-French and therefore anti-British image by their overt admiration for the French Revolution and support for its military cause. The 'Friends of Peace' were the group which most singlemindedly opposed the war against France as an end in itself. They campaigned against it both because they opposed war in general, on grounds of religion and morality, and because they had specific ideological and practical objections to the conflict against revolutionary France in particular. They channelled various political,

religious and commercial groups to the general anti-war protest whenever and wherever they could, including the Foxites in Parliament and the radicals outside it. By this means, and by their primary concern with seeing the war brought to an end, the Friends of Peace led the British campaign against the government's war with revolutionary France.

Religious arguments were used by laymen both to support and to oppose the war, but usually in combination with political reasoning and in a supporting role. By contrast, sermons preached by churchmen on the subject of the conflict naturally emphasized a theological reading of the situation and made less attempt to persuade their audiences with secular political arguments. The continued importance of religion to the great majority of the British people in the eighteenth century, and of religious polemic to political debates of the period, have recently been highlighted by several historians. Chapter 6 considers the theological-political responses to the war of churchmen of different British denominations. In their sermons, questions such as the moral and theological justifications for war and patriotism were examined; and the nature of this particular conflict, and such grounds for it as related to religious and moral issues, were discussed in the light of a theological understanding of the nature of God and of man, and in terms of a political theology of society, the State and the international community. This chapter also studies the influence of politics and ecclesiastical politics as further factors in the formation of churchmen's attitudes to the war, as well as the practical responses that ministers urged on their congregations and the impact that their political preaching during the war may have had.

Chapter 7 investigates the active involvement of British women in the war against revolutionary France (both in support of and in opposition to it) and the opinions of female writers on its grounds, nature and conduct. Their opinions were naturally often identical to those of men, but it is argued that, whatever part of the political or social spectrum they represented, women consistently emphasized certain issues or concerns. They struggled also with the question of their own role as women in a society at war, and the chapter also looks at the views of both male and female writers on women's participation in the war effort. The length of the war, its direct impact on the civilian population of Britain and the conscious emphasis in Britain on its ideological issues, together with the recent substantial growth of literacy, the press and popular politics, all contributed to allow women a greater opportunity to become involved in the British debate on this war than had been the case in previous conflicts.

Finally, the attitudes of the ordinary people of Britain and the role of public opinion in the war are discussed in chapter 8. This uses the evidence of diaries, letters, memoirs and graphic prints. It also uses the records of more sporadic, and

perhaps temporary, demonstrations of pro-war and anti-war feeling than those which were discussed in chapters 3 to 5 under the headings of campaigning patriotism and hostility to the war. The attempts of the political elite to influence public opinion demonstrate its importance to them. Nevertheless, after tracing popular pro-war, anti-war and uncommitted popular behaviour, it is argued that public opinion was generally fluid in its reactions to the conflict and that it did not substantially engage with the issues of the war debate.

The British war against revolutionary France was naturally often supported for pragmatic and self-interested reasons. It was also opposed instrumentally, to further other ends, or for reasons of private economy and welfare. To a significant extent, however, it was both perceived to be, unusually, a conflict about political and even religious ideologies, and supported or opposed on those grounds.

1. Edmund Burke and the War Against the French Revolution

[Burke] is the man that will mark this age, marked as it is in itself, by events, to all time.¹

After months of mutual suspicion, fragile communications and increasing tension, Revolutionary France declared war on Great Britain on 1 February 1793—a struggle which was to last for twenty-two years, except for the truce of Amiens in 1802-3—and the news reached Britain on 7 February. Edmund Burke, the British conservative politician and polemicist, however, had been at war against the French Revolution since the autumn of 1790, when he had written and published his hugely successful *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. This eloquent and detailed condemnation of all that the French Revolution seemed to Burke to stand for was his personal declaration of a war whose active fire would cease only with his death in 1797. The British ministry appeared vague and even divided about the nature of the conflict and its fundamental aims, but Burke's campaign against the French Revolution was from its inception war to the death. Because of his early response to the Revolution and support for a war against it, moreover, and because of his loud proclamation of his views, he largely set the battle-lines for the rest of the British debate on the war.

In August 1789 he had written to Lord Charlemont of the British response to the French Revolution:

As to us here our thoughts of every thing at home are suspended, by our astonishment at the wonderful Spectacle which is exhibited in a Neighbouring and rival Country—what Spectators, and what actors! England gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for Liberty and not knowing whether to blame or to applaud! The thing indeed, though I thought I saw something like it in progress for several years, has still something in it paradoxical and Mysterious. The spirit it is impossible not to admire; but the old Parisian ferocity has broken out in a shocking manner. It is true, that this may be no more than a sudden explosion: If so no indication can be taken from it.

'But,' he continued ominously, 'if it should be character rather than accident, then that people are not fit for Liberty, and must have a Strong hand like that of their former masters to coerce them.'² By October 1789, his own hesitation and doubtful

¹ George Canning, 13 July 1797, quoted in third Earl of Malmesbury (ed.), *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury* (4 vols.: London, 1844) [hereafter *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*], iii, 399.

² T.W. Copeland et al (eds.), *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke* (10 vols.: Cambridge and Chicago, 1967-1970) [hereafter *Burke Corr.*], vi, 10.

admiration were evaporating and he was writing to his son Richard about his concern for 'the portentous state of France—where the Elements which compose Human Society seem all to be dissolved, and a world of Monsters to be produc'd in the place of it—where Mirabeau presides as the Grand Anarch; and the late Grand Monarch makes a figure as ridiculous as pitiable.'³

The French Revolution was an attack on aristocratic power and privilege in France, and Burke's concern deepened as he saw signs of the revolutionary Jacobin movement spreading throughout Europe.⁴ He came to see the Revolution as an attack on the basic foundations of European civilization, which included not only the social order but also the systems of morality and belief on which that was built. The *Reflections* and the rest of Burke's battery of literary weapons against the French Revolution were therefore fired against it primarily from a desire to preserve the old European order, especially since that of Britain was an integral part of it. The European *ancien régime's* 'code of chivalry' was to him, as James K. Chandler explains, a means of covering decently and indeed of ennobling the naked power of its rulers, and the only alternative that he could envisage was 'a state of Hobbesian chaos'.⁵

It was not long before Burke began to view war against the French Revolution as a possibility. As early as 12 November 1789, he told Lord Fitzwilliam that he would wish to see France 'circumscribed within moderate bounds'. In his speech in the House of Commons debate on the Army Estimates on 9 February 1790, he in fact gave it as his opinion that France need not be considered as much of a military threat for some time to come; but he also suggested that the French Revolution had 'brought on such calamities as no country, without a long war, has ever been known to suffer, and which may in the end produce such a war, and perhaps, many such.' In the *Reflections*, he hinted that the British government 'may find it expedient to make war' upon the revolutionaries.⁶ Burke was also the first to argue that force *must* be used against revolutionary France. On 25 January 1791, he wrote to a distressed member of the French aristocracy, the Comtesse de Montrond. 'Alas! Madam, it is not to me, or to such services as can come from me, that the persecuted honour of France must apply,' he told her. 'Nothing more can be said. Something must be done. You have

³ *ibid.*, pp.29-30.

⁴ Frank O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke. His Political Philosophy* (London, 1973), pp.120-3.

⁵ James K. Chandler, 'Poetical Liberties: Burke's France and the "Adequate Representation" of the English', in François Furet and Mona Ozouf (eds.), *The French Revolution and the Creation of Modern Political Culture*, vol. iii, *The Transformation of Political Culture, 1789-1848* (Oxford, 1989), p.53.

⁶ *Burke Corr.*, vi, 36; *P.H.*, xxviii, 353, 358, 9 February 1790; Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), ed. Conor Cruise O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1968), p.263.

an armed Tyranny to deal with; and nothing but arms can pull it down.’⁷ From this time on, he vigorously advocated European intervention in France, certain that the royalists within France were too weak to overturn the Revolution by themselves, dispersed and disarmed as they were, and equally convinced that ‘no Monarchy limited or unlimited, nor any of the old Republics, can possibly be safe as long as this strange, nameless, wild, enthusiastic thing is established in the Center of Europe’.⁸ He told Sir James Bland Burges that Britain must be prepared for ‘very great and awful Events both at home and abroad’, and expressed his astonishment that the European Powers without exception had chosen to be ‘mere Spectators of this scene’. They were, he lamented to the Chevalier de la Bintinaye, ‘contending with each other about points of trivial importance, and on old, worn out principles and Topics of Policy, when the very existence of all of them is menaced, by a new Evil...’. By July 1791 he was becoming more impatient. Writing to Henry Dundas, the Home Secretary, he argued that ‘this seems to me a moment for some decision in the foreign System so far as it regards France.—Surely a Step may be taken with great safety, great dignity and great Effect. The time for it may pass.’ He told his son in August that he was sure that the revolutionaries were making preparations of some kind, and he began talking in terms of an enemy: ‘Oh! let those who would [restore] the good in that Country be careful how they despise their Enemy!’⁹

Burke did not limit his personal battle against the French Revolution to the *Reflections* and his wide private correspondence. He thought himself publicly ‘bound to express his own sentiments with freedom and energy in a crisis of such importance to the whole human race,’ he wrote in his *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (May 1791);¹⁰ and his *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (August 1791), *Thoughts on French Affairs* (December 1791) and *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs* (November 1792) also denounced the Revolution and urgently insisted that the European Powers intervene. Some of his pamphlets were clearly written in a specific attempt to prevail upon government policy, such as *Hints for a Memorial to be Delivered to M.M.* (1791) and *Thoughts on French Affairs*, and he even sent his son to Coblenz to try to influence counter-revolutionary tactics.¹¹

⁷ *Burke Corr.*, vi, 211.

⁸ Burke to John Trevor, [January 1791], *Burke Corr.*, vi, 217-8.

⁹ Burke to Sir James Bland Burges, [29 June 1791], to the Chevalier de la Bintinaye, [March 1791], to Henry Dundas, [1 July 1791], and to Richard Burke, jr., 9 August 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 279, 242, 280, 333.

¹⁰ *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* (general editors Paul Langford et al; Oxford) [hereafter, *Writings and Speeches*], viii (ed. L.G. Mitchell, 1989), 308. For Burke’s split from the Foxite Whigs in Parliamentary Opposition and move to supporting the Pitt administration, see ch.4.

¹¹ Conor Cruise O’Brien, *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography and Commented Anthology of Edmund Burke* (London, 1992), pp.439, 452, 466-7, 490, 544.

Nevertheless, his efforts to stir his country to action did not end with the outbreak of war, for he was rarely satisfied with the ministry's conduct of it and the national spirit often seemed to waver. He therefore continued to speak out in the House of Commons until his retirement in June 1794, and to write letters, talk to statesmen and publish his views on the war until his death, his language as colourful and pointed, as R.B. McDowell has remarked, as James Gillray's caricatures.¹² There were times and circumstances, he declared in the *Appeal*, in which not to speak out was at least to connive.¹³ This chapter considers his reasons for demanding a war with revolutionary France, the aims for which he insisted it should be fought, his views on its nature and conduct, and his reasons for vehemently opposing peace with the French Republic.

I

Burke's view of the French Revolution was fundamental to his reasons for insisting that Britain and indeed Europe should make war upon France. The war he advocated was no typical eighteenth-century pursuit of territorial aggrandizement and power. Nor was it primarily motivated by a desire for vengeance against the foreign aggression of revolutionary France, which to him was a mere symptom of its real malignancy. He reduced the French Revolution to a system of principles which had overturned the *ancien régime* in France, and which was fast spreading to menace European peace, security and moral values, and he insisted that it must be wholly destroyed for the future of European civilization.

Burke wrote and published his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in direct response to the publication in January 1790 of Richard Price's *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country*. In this lecture to the Revolution Society, Price had associated an enthusiasm for the American and French Revolutions with a radical interpretation of British politics and, in particular, the Glorious Revolution of 1688, pointing to the French Revolution as completing what the 1688 Revolution had merely begun.¹⁴ The pamphlet alerted Burke to the possibility of British radicals following the French example, and the *Reflections* were therefore designed to expose what in his view was false thinking about both the French and Glorious Revolutions in order to obstruct this potential disaster.¹⁵ A substantial part of the book was devoted to an

¹² *Burke Corr.*, viii, p.xviii. 'He would prefer infinitely a solid English dish; a slice of good roast beef to all the kick-shaws of France' (*P.H.*, xxx, 437, 18 February 1793).

¹³ *Works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke* (Bohn edition: 6 vols., London, 1883-6) [hereafter, *Works*], iii, 95.

¹⁴ John Derry, 'The Opposition Whigs and the French Revolution 1789-1815' in H.T. Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution* (London, 1989), pp.41-2.

¹⁵ O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, pp.394-6.

exposition of the 1688 Revolution as 'a revolution not made, but prevented',¹⁶ a series of events preserving the political power of the king and the landed governing élite in the British constitution. Burke went on to argue that the radical doctrines falsely claimed to be at work in the English Revolution of 1688 were proved by their activity in the French Revolution to be evil by nature and by effect.¹⁷

The particular danger of the French doctrines of equality, reason and liberty lay in their superficial appeal to ordinary men. Burke argued, however, that these abstract principles were a menace to political and social order, because they encouraged men to seek perfection in human affairs, where it could not be found and, in its pursuit, to overturn all else (including admirable compromises with perfection), leaving a trail of destruction in their wake.¹⁸ Universal peace and international concord, he argued, was 'a coarse and clumsy deception': far from peace and good will to men, the French revolutionaries 'meditated war against all other governments' through systematically inciting sedition among the peoples of Europe.¹⁹

Essential to Burke's own political thinking were the principles of prejudice and prescription. These were the claims and authority of long usage and possession which bound one generation to the next, preventing the anarchy of disjointed social relationships and structures by securing property to its owners and their descendants. 'Men are born into a society whose order is already established, and much of that order depends upon an instinctive, unthinking adherence to prescriptive claims.'²⁰ It was wise to use the mature experience of the past for the benefit of the present generation. The fact that prescription had worked in the past and, moreover, was now working in the present proved its utility.²¹ It was not, therefore, only the revolutionaries' assertion of reason alone to which Burke particularly objected, as Francis P. Canavan points out, but also their claims for individual reason. No individual intellect or reason was likely to prove more reliable than the collective

¹⁶ *P.H.*, xxviii, 361, 9 February 1790; c.f. 'An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs' (1791), *Works*, iii, 41-64.

¹⁷ In *Burke, Paine, and the Rights of Man* (The Hague, 1963), R.R. Fennessy has noted that Burke used the device of a letter to a French friend for the *Reflections* to avoid the appearance of lecturing the British on their own constitution, by addressing his remarks to a foreigner. This allowed him to present his own ideas as typical of the British system of government and to place his British adversaries in the position of an unconstitutional and un-British minority, and to flatter British national sentiments by stressing the superiority of the British constitution and institutions (pp.145-6).

¹⁸ Michael Freeman, *Edmund Burke and the Critique of Political Radicalism* (Oxford, 1980), p.168; see also *P.H.*, xxviii, 434-5, 2 March 1790.

¹⁹ 'Appeal', pp.10-11.

²⁰ Quotation from *Reflections*, pp.192-3, 195; Carl B. Cone, *Burke and the Nature of Politics*, vol. II, 'The Age of the French Revolution' (Kentucky, 1964), pp.333-4.

²¹ J.G.A. Pocock, 'Burke and the Ancient Constitution—A Problem in the History of Ideas', in *The Historical Journal*, iii (1960), 129; Freeman, *The Critique of Political Radicalism*, p.96.

wisdom of a people through history.²² Burke was not opposed to change, however; he knew that it was both necessary and inevitable in human experience. Rather, he argued that progress should be gradual. The political system of a country ought to evolve slowly over time, conserving the good and improving upon it. The British constitution was an excellent example of this, he thought, evolving as prudence acted on circumstances through time to safeguard and to refine. The French had been presented with a perfect opportunity to follow suit—their monarchy had not been incapable of reform—but the revolutionaries had swept all aside in their mad rush after what they supposed to be perfection.²³

For Burke, the twin pillars of society were property and religion, for the social order was based upon property and sanctioned by the divine will, and as much upheld by the church as by the state.²⁴ He regarded them both as inviolable, and he condemned the Revolution's subversion of both as the attempted annihilation of the entire social order. The leading Jacobins were themselves 'drawn from the dregs of society', and he believed the Revolution to be the result of a plot hatched by philosophers, the new monied interest in France and the men of letters.²⁵ Their political system, based as it was on the immediate self-interest of the individual, was inherently unstable, for it must lack certainty and constancy. Burke 'could not conceive of the individual as a moral and rational being apart from society', and could only see the French Revolution as regressive in its unchaining the individual from the established links of society and claiming his right to self-government.²⁶ He did not deny the existence of God-given, innate rights, but he held them to be irrelevant to men in society. The real rights of men were civil rights, which were simply aspects of justice and social order—they were another way of defining social relations.²⁷ How, he asked, 'can any man claim, under the conventions of civil society, rights which do not so much as suppose its existence? Rights which are absolutely repugnant to it?...Men cannot enjoy the rights of an uncivil and of a civil state together.'²⁸ Social

²² Francis P. Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke* (Cambridge, 1960), pp.73-7.

²³ *Reflections*, pp.105-6, 121-5, 236, 266-7, 323, 375.

²⁴ Cone, 'The Age of the French Revolution', p.424.

²⁵ Yang, 'The British Debate on the French Revolution', pp.75-84; O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, pp.448-9.

²⁶ O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke. His Political Philosophy*, p.124; Alfred Cobban, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1929), p.52; Freeman, *The Critique of Political Radicalism*, p.79.

²⁷ O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke. His Political Philosophy*, pp.48-9; Freeman, *The Critique of Political Radicalism*, pp.320-1; Fennessy, *Burke, Paine, and the Rights of Man*, pp.139-141.

²⁸ *Reflections*, p.150.

restraint was also a right of men. Moreover, these rights were an inheritance under the laws of the nation, not rights justified by abstract reason.²⁹

Corrupted by their false principles, the revolutionaries, Burke claimed, were inherently and irredeemably wicked men. A new school of murder and barbarism had been set up in Paris, he warned, inspired and controlled by philosophers and metaphysicians, men who pursued unattainable ideals and used these to justify any means they considered necessary. The heart of a 'thoroughbred metaphysician', he wrote, 'is like that of the principle of evil himself, incorporeal, pure, unmixed, dephlegmated, defecated evil.'³⁰ They were all 'atheistic banditti', whether they were Brissotins or Maratists; even the constitutional royalists, if they differed at all, were simply the tools of the 'more determined, able, and systematic regicides', 'the synagogue of antichrist'.³¹ Evidence of this, he suggested, was to be found in the increasing dissipation of life in France and particularly in its capital city. Marriage, for instance, had been degraded from a Christian sacrament into a civil contract, with the result that by 1793 one in three marriages in Paris was ending in divorce. 'From this we may take our estimate of the havoc that has been made through all the relations of life.'³²

France was much more of a danger to Britain and the rest of Europe as a republic than it had been under the monarchy, according to Burke. The fourth *Letter on a Regicide Peace* was a later work addressed to Earl Fitzwilliam in refutation of Lord Auckland's pamphlet, *Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War in the Fourth Week of October, 1795*, in which Auckland asked whether France, weakened by republicanism and the exertions of war, might not be a more peaceable neighbour for Britain than the old monarchy had been. Such a claim, insisted Burke, was Jacobinism 'sublimed and exalted into most pure and perfect essence'. Auckland had fallen into the trap of Jacobin deception, for the true comparison was not between a greedy monarchy and a fatigued republic, but between a moderate territorial power and a powerful empire in the hands of a republic lusting after dominion.³³ Republican

²⁹ Pocock, 'Burke and the Ancient Constitution', p.128; Charles Parkin, *The Moral Basis of Burke's Political Thought* (Cambridge, 1956), p.17.

³⁰ 'A Letter From the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, to a Noble Lord' (1796), *Writings and Speeches*, ix (ed. R.B. McDowell, 1991), 176.

³¹ 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies with Respect to France' (1793), *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 461; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace' (1796), *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 245; Harvey Mitchell, 'Presentation', in Furet and Ozouf (eds.), *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p.15. See also *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 6-7. Burke, as O'Brien points out, had dubbed the revolutionaries 'regicides' as early as April 1792 [O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, p.486].

³² Gerald W. Chapman, *Edmund Burke. The Practical Imagination* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), p.235; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.245.

³³ Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace' (1797), *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 52.

France was neither the ancient France with ordinary ambition and ordinary means, nor a new power of an old kind, but 'a new power of a new species'. One of the principal targets of the Revolution had been France's international relations: 'The Revolution was made, not to make France free, but to make her formidable; not to make her a neighbour, but a mistress; not to make her more observant of laws, but to put her in a condition to impose them. To make France truly formidable, it was necessary that France should be new-modelled'.³⁴

He feared French expansion *per se*, and its upset of the European balance of power, but still more did he fear the subversion of the continent by French principles. The combination of these two threats was terrifying, for it meant the destruction of European society.³⁵ The Revolution was not just the subversion of the monarchy, but a crusade against a whole way of life, against the social order which to Burke was the embodiment and bulwark of men's rights and liberties in its protection of property and the propertied—'that order of things under which our part of the world has so long flourishd, and indeed been in a progressive State of improvement, the Limits of which, if it had not been thus rudely stopped, it would not have been easy for the imagination to fix'.³⁶

It was in Britain's own interests to go to war with France, Burke argued, as a self-interested safety precaution, if for no other reason. It would be foolish in the extreme for the British government not to take French events seriously and with due caution. By its mere geographical position, France could affect every state of Europe, and it had always been British policy to exercise vigilance over French external proceedings. Now those were intimately bound up with France's internal affairs; indeed, the French had made it impossible for European governments to ignore the Revolution and its principles by actively notifying them of their new domestic arrangements, an unusual step for any state to take. War was 'a plan formed upon the ancient policy and practice of Great Britain, and of Europe...which is...more strongly called for by the present circumstances than by any former...'.³⁷

The response of the British government would have to be made in the light of the British constitution and domestic situation, for the effects of the Revolution could not be confined to France. It was '*a revolution of doctrine and theoretick dogma*' with a policy of proselytism and exploiting divisions, factions and opposition to established

³⁴ Second 'Letter on a Regicide Peace' (1796), *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 278.

³⁵ Burke to General Dalton, 6 August 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 383; *Reflections*, p.170.

³⁶ Quotation from Burke to the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, c.6 August 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 387. See also 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', Appendix, p.505; Cobban, *The Revolt Against the Eighteenth Century*, pp.112-3; Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke*, p.144; Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p.92.

³⁷ 'Heads for Consideration', p.400.

government abroad.³⁸ The Austrian Netherlands, the German and Italian states, Spain and Switzerland would be the first objects of French attack because of their weakness and proximity to France; but Sweden, Russia, Poland and the United Provinces were also unstable politically and hence also vulnerable. 'The revolution harpies of France, sprung from night and hell, or from that chaotic anarchy, which generates equivocally "all monstrous, all prodigious things", cuckoo-like, adulterously lay their eggs, and brood over, and hatch them in the nest of every neighbouring state.'³⁹ Britain itself had no cause for complacency, for, since it possessed the greatest international influence in Europe, Britain was the nation which the French wished most to corrupt, in order to speed the progress of their anarchism.⁴⁰ Revolutionary France had declared that physical and moral ties already connecting Savoy with itself justified its annexation of Savoy; 'no doubt,' he warned, 'they will soon find out the physical and moral connexion subsisting between them and this country...'.⁴¹

Strong measures were the more vital because of French partisans already in Britain and elsewhere in Europe. At the time of the publication of his *Reflections*, Burke was not over-anxious about them, though cautious: he told Calonne that 'I dont much fear from the faction here who correspond with those who resemble them on the other side of the Water—but no man living is intitled after all that has happend to despise men that mean ill on account of their apparent want of power.'⁴² By the end of 1791 he was suspicious of 'all who are dissenters in character, temper, and disposition', whether in a political or religious sense. He was also hostile to the British press, claiming that the Jacobins had got almost complete possession of it and used it to the full ('the Newspapers of Hell are doing their Business diligently—and do all they can to stir up the Mobb').⁴³ Parliamentary reform might look innocent, even to some of its supporters, but it had the same tendency as Jacobinism—the complete destruction of the constitution and 'the rude inroad of Gallic tumult'. In his *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, he claimed of the campaign for parliamentary reform that 'Whether it is necessarily connected in theory with Jacobinism is not worth a dispute. The two things are connected in fact.'⁴⁴

³⁸ 'Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs' (1792), *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 387-8; 'Thoughts on French Affairs' (1791), *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 341-2.

³⁹ 'Letter to a Noble Lord', p.156.

⁴⁰ 'Appeal', p.95.

⁴¹ *P.H.*, xxx, 71, 54-5, 13 December 1792.

⁴² 25 October 1790, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 141.

⁴³ Burke to Earl Fitzwilliam, 5 October 1792, and to Richard Burke, jr., 1 October 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 229, 225.

⁴⁴ 'Letter to a Noble Lord', p.173; 'Observations on the Conduct of the Minority' (1793), *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 443.

Burke made no distinction between British and French Jacobins: 'There is a Confraternity between the two divisions of the French faction, on the other side of the Water, and on this. They are both guilty, and equally guilty of the late acts which have wounded to the Quick all the moral feelings of mankind.'⁴⁵ He thought that the British Jacobins aimed to conspire with their French counterparts to arrange an invasion of Britain and the subjugation of the nation and its government to the French Republic. 'The [British] Jacobins are worse than lost to their country. Their hearts are abroad. Their sympathy with the regicides of France is complete.'⁴⁶ The Irish radicals were particularly dangerous in this regard, he believed, for they threatened to open a back door for Jacobinism to take Britain by the rear. Ireland, he told Windham, 'is no longer an obscure dependency of this Kingdom. What is done there vitally effects [*sic*] the whole System of Europe.'⁴⁷

His frustration with the British government, which before late 1792 seemed not to realize the danger of the advance of French doctrines in Britain, was intense. 'My poor opinion,' he wrote to Grenville on 19 September 1792, 'is that these principles, considering their *Quality*, and the *means* by which they are supported, cannot possibly be realized in practice in France, without an *absolute certainty*, and that at no remote period, of overturning the whole fabrick of the Constitution.'⁴⁸ He was convinced that 'the foreign System will now settle domestick politicks.'⁴⁹ From November 1792, the case was stronger still. The French had shown republican revolution to be '*a thing feasible in practice*' and, since the Edict of Fraternity of 19 November, were offering forces to assist subject peoples of other nations to overturn their governments in favour of republicanism.⁵⁰ The combination of domestic partisans and French troops was the real threat to the British constitution and social order; war against France was the only alternative to a British civil war.⁵¹

In his implacable hostility to French principles, Burke conceived the revolutionaries to have a drive equally unrelenting, and he warned against hoping for signs of repentance in them. Such hopes were tantamount to believing in the conversion of the devil himself.⁵² He was also convinced that neither instability nor bankruptcy would succeed in dissolving the Revolution in France. By December

⁴⁵ Burke to Lord Loughborough, 27 January 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 344. See also Burke to Windham, 23 August 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 415.

⁴⁶ Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.105.

⁴⁷ Burke to Windham, 16 October 1794, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 34-41.

⁴⁸ *Burke Corr.*, vii, 219.

⁴⁹ Burke to John King, 2 Nov. 1791, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 439.

⁵⁰ 'Thoughts on French Affairs', p.371.

⁵¹ *P.H.*, xxx, 110, 15 December 1792.

⁵² 'A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly', p.299; Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.70.

1791, French bankruptcy had run as far as it was ever likely to run, in his opinion, yet the revolution showed no signs of faltering.⁵³

Material resources never have supplied, nor ever can supply, the want of unity in design, and constancy in pursuit. But unity and design and boldness in pursuit, have never wanted resources and never will. We have not considered as we ought the dreadful energy of a state, in which the property has nothing to do with the government.⁵⁴

There was no hope that that the French Revolution, evil, menacing, and grasping, would fail of its own accord. Only war would remove the evil at the heart of Europe, which, if left, would spread to every part of the circumference, circle beyond circle, defying whatever petty defences were employed against it.⁵⁵ As Burke wrote in the preface to his *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority* (September 1793), 'I considered a general war against Jacobins and Jacobinism, as the only possible chance of saving Europe (and England as included in Europe) from a truly frightful revolution.'⁵⁶ Negotiation with the revolutionaries, as advocated by the Foxites, was a completely inadequate means of dealing with the situation. It was extremely unlikely that the French would be persuaded to repeal the offending decrees of November and December 1792 by mere negotiation; the revolutionaries, having violated international treaties and laws as it pleased them, could scarcely be trusted to treat on any basis of law; and it would open Britain to the insult of having her ambassador sent home unrecognized. The revolutionaries were 'outlaws of humanity, an uncommunicable people'.⁵⁷

Burke was by no means a war-monger, as his pleas for peace in India, Ireland and America had demonstrated, but he was quite clear that war was the ultimate means of justice in the world, and that this was an occasion when it was indispensable.⁵⁸ He realized that the balance of power was too often made the pretext for wars of ambition, but he constantly defended the right of a country to interfere in the internal affairs of another if it became necessary for the sake of its own security. Those who argued otherwise, he said, failed to distinguish between the promotion of sedition and rebellion in another country and the support of one side in a country already divided. He frequently referred to Vattel's *Law of Nations* (1758) for support, where it was

⁵³ 'Thoughts on French Affairs', p.362-3.

⁵⁴ Second 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.289.

⁵⁵ 'Heads for Consideration', p.402.

⁵⁶ *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 404.

⁵⁷ *P.H.*, xxx, 436 (18 February 1793), 1010-1 (17 June 1793), 439 (18 February 1793), 111 (15 December 1792), 386 (12 February 1793).

⁵⁸ First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.248.

stated that a nation trampling on the rights of other nations might be repressed by the international community; that foreign powers might help oppressed peoples against tyranny; and that, in civil war, there were two distinct powers, either of which might be assisted from abroad—all of these principles, Burke argued, were applicable to the European situation created by the Revolution in France.⁵⁹ Furthermore, by the law of civil vicinity, a man was entitled to make representation to a judge against his neighbour who had erected something on his property which was unacceptable to him; between nations the principle was the same, but, in the absence of an impartial judge, the ‘grand vicinage of Europe’, or the rest of the commonwealth, must be aware of and use its right to prevent ‘any capital innovation which may amount to the erection of a dangerous nuisance’, under which heading the French Revolution might certainly be placed.⁶⁰

War was necessary to strengthen the ‘sound part’ of France—the royalists. No counter-revolution could be expected from forces within France alone, due to the weaknesses of the royalists: their lack of internal leadership, the tyranny of the municipal republican committees and their dissipation throughout the country. Even before the execution of Louis XVI, it was plain that he was not likely to succeed in ‘breaking their prisons, terrifying their Enemies and animating their friends’.⁶¹ External force was necessary in order to achieve the destruction of the Jacobin government of France. It was also incumbent upon Britain to help its allies. This was partly because of treaty obligations, as in the case of the United Provinces; and partly because the European opposition to revolutionary France had no chance of victory without Britain’s involvement and, indeed, leadership. Britain could not afford to sit back and hope that the other states would do the dirty work for it. It was more likely to play a fair mediating role in the alliance than any other power, since its interests were less likely to clash with those of other states, due to its geographical situation as an island and maritime power; besides, it possessed the only navy which could keep that of France in check. Without Great Britain, the cement which might hold all the other States together was missing. In late November 1792 he thought ‘Europe recoverable yet. But it must be by a great and speedy Effort of *this Country*’.⁶² Those who argued for peace were misguided, for peace with France might well place Britain at war with the rest of Europe.⁶³

⁵⁹ ‘Remarks on the Policy of the Allies’, Appendix, pp.500-1.

⁶⁰ First ‘Letter on a Regicide Peace’, pp.250-1; see also *P.H.*, xxx, 433-4, 1012, 18 February 1793, 17 June 1793.

⁶¹ ‘Letter to a Member of the National Assembly’, p.305; Burke to the Chevalier de la Bintinaye, March 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 241.

⁶² Burke to Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 307.

⁶³ *P.H.*, xxx, 1008-9, 17 June 1793.

Burke vehemently criticized the ministry's hesitancy to go to war. It was simply not worthwhile, in this case, to discuss, 'like sophisters', whether some evil might be tolerated for the sake of some benefit. Great and unequivocal good 'must be probable almost to certainty' before the well-being of British citizens ought to be risked.⁶⁴ Even in 1794 he was complaining to Lord Loughborough:

I very much doubt, whether in any Country, they who have the charge of the flock, are sufficiently aware of the Giant strides with which the great overbearing Master-calamity of the time is advancing towards us. All you the Great act just as if you thought a thousand things were to be feared or pursued for their own separate sakes when, in reality, none are worth notice, otherwise than as they tend to promote or to resist the Cause of Jacobinism. ⁶⁵

The ministry had persevered in neutrality 'with the most pedantick excess' for too long. 'If *your* hands are not on your swords, their knives will be at your throats. There is no medium,—there is no temperament,—there is no compromise with Jacobinism.'⁶⁶

II

Burke thought that the allies' aims ought to be clear and unambiguous, in order to prevent needless bloodshed and waste in the pursuit of irrelevant ends. To this end, he wrote the *Heads for the Consideration on the Present State of Affairs* in November 1792 and his *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies with Respect to France* in October 1793. Once the allied aims had been specified, they should be pursued singlemindedly. 'Our politics want directness and simplicity,' he complained in November 1793.⁶⁷

Burke believed that the extinction of Jacobinism in France was 'the sole worthy object of the Arms and politicks of this time', and that this should be the primary aim of the war against revolutionary France. The more permanent the Jacobin regime seemed to be, the more convinced Burke became that if it were not destroyed, it would destroy the whole European social order. 'We are, as I think, fighting for our *all*.' Jacobinism, however, would not fall so long as it was pursued as a secondary object, behind the distraction of territorial ambition in the guises of indemnity and

⁶⁴ 'Appeal', p.16.

⁶⁵ 19 October 1794, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 44.

⁶⁶ Burke to Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 309; Burke to Windham, 30 December 1794, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 104.

⁶⁷ Burke to Windham, 25 November 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 489.

security. His comment on the French recapture of Dunkirk was 'that the whole Scheme of the war is mistaken, (or appears to me to be so), for it ought to be, not for Dunkirk, or this or t' other Town—but to drive Jacobinism out of the World.'⁶⁸ The aims of the British government and of the European alliance, judged by this standard, lay wide open to criticism. They were too numerous: 'The allied powers have many Objects in common, and many seperately [*sic*]; and I fear they are not, all of them perfectly consistent with each other nor pursued in proper subordination to their relative importance.'⁶⁹ Moreover, they were too concerned with greed and territorial ambition, 'as if no Jacobinism existed in the world'.⁷⁰

Burke made it clear that in seeking the destruction of Jacobinism he did not mean that France itself should be destroyed. He was at war with Jacobinism, not France, and for him, military victory was only a necessary preliminary to the re-establishment of French society. Nor did he think the total annihilation of France desirable either for Britain or for Europe. He feared that Austria and Prussia wanted the destruction of France as a great power and that this would ruin the balance of power in Europe and lead to further war among countries preying upon France. France would be weakened sufficiently by the time Jacobinism had been extirpated not to pose a threat to the other European states; indeed, it would require to be nursed and supported rather than further drained.⁷¹

As to the government which should be established in France after the Jacobin régime had been crushed, Burke thought that its precise details could be determined only after the conclusion of peace. He also argued that its form was irrelevant so long as it was stable and guaranteed property rights and justice. 'It was not for any particular system of government that he contended, but for some government.'⁷² Nevertheless, he did have clear ideas on the form he believed would be the most likely to achieve these standards. In his *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (October 1793), he suggested that a military government would be necessary immediately after the end of the war 'for the energetic foundation of a lasting order.' The 'lawful prince' would not have an easy beginning, and he would need to win loyalty and submission. 'He is to be always (I speak nearly to the letter) on horseback.'⁷³ Burke was persuaded that

⁶⁸ Burke to Loughborough, 12 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 518; Burke to Capt. Woodford, 13 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 522; Burke to Dr. Charles Burney, 14, 15 September 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 422.

⁶⁹ Burke to Lord Buckingham, 1 December 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 498.

⁷⁰ 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', p.491.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp.488-9, 491; O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke. His Political Philosophy*, p.128.

⁷² Quotation from *P.H.*, xxxi, 380, 11 April 1794. See also 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', p.488; Burke to Charles-Jean-François Depont, November 1789, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 45-6.

⁷³ *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 492.

the only adequate form of government for the renewed France would be the 'lawful prince', that is, a restored monarchy. 'France to be anything,' he wrote, 'must be a Monarchy; and a very strong Monarchy too.' Theoretical constitutions and plans had bedevilled France throughout the Revolution and nothing would be of real service to it but to re-establish the old order.⁷⁴ As time passed, he favoured less and less modification of the old régime.⁷⁵

Burke's idea of the re-establishment of the old order, therefore, did not merely involve the restoration of the monarchy but also the restoration of property. This, he argued, followed logically and necessarily. A hereditary monarchy could not exist if nothing else was hereditary or permanent. Moreover, the re-establishment of the whole propertied order was necessary if Jacobinism was to be properly extinguished. The alternative, Burke warned, was over the next twenty years to watch the property and government of every state in Europe falling as they had done in France.⁷⁶ The French constitution must be fitted to the French people themselves—precisely what the Jacobins had failed to do, for, in Burke's opinion, 'the people' were limited to the original landowners, the estates, the corporations, and the clergy, 'as the true constituent parts of the nation, and forming the legally organized parts of the people of France'.⁷⁷ Therefore it was essential that property should be restored as well as the monarchy. He did, however, recognize that it would be impractical as well as impolitic to attempt to reinstate the *ancien régime* in every detail. 'That was though not so violent a State of Anarchy as well as the present. If it were even possible to lay things down exactly as they stood, before the series of experimental politicks began, I am quite sure that they could not long continue in that situation.'⁷⁸

III

Burke had a very clear conception of what sort of war Britain was involved in and ought to be fighting against revolutionary France, and he was probably the first in Britain to see it in this way. He had an almost Pauline vision of wrestling 'not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the

⁷⁴ Burke to unknown, [1791], *Burke Corr.*, vi, 480; Burke to John Trevor, January 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 218.

⁷⁵ Colin Lucas, 'Edmund Burke and the Émigrés', in Furet and Ozouf (eds.), *The Transformation of Political Culture*, p.109.

⁷⁶ 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', pp.464-5; Burke to General Dalton, 6 August 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 384; see also Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, p.91; Schofield, 'English Conservative Thought', pp.200-1.

⁷⁷ 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', pp.457-8; 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly', *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 332.

⁷⁸ Burke to unknown, [1791], *Burke Corr.*, vi, 480.

darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places', and indeed a following of 'war crusaders' collected behind him: those writers and politicians who shared many of his views on the war and often treated his writings and opinions as if they had near apostolic authority.⁷⁹

In determining the nature of the war, Burke's first consideration was the character of the enemy. He continually exhorted the ministry that, 'in all we do, whether in the struggle or after it, it is necessary that we should constantly have in our eye the nature and character of the enemy we have to contend with.' Ministers must abandon the notion that Britain was fighting the people of France, or they would be unable to fight the real enemy effectively. Britain was not involved in 'a common political war with an old recognized member of the commonwealth of Christian Europe'. Burke distinguished between the geographical nation of France and what he called 'the moral France'. These were normally one and the same thing, but in these disjointed times, 'the truth is, that France is out of itself'; almost literally so, for the *émigrés* made up a good deal of what he classed the 'moral' nation.⁸⁰

Thus, Britain was involved in a French *civil* war, and a civil war on the grand scale. 'The state of France is perfectly simple. It consists of but two descriptions—The Oppressors and the Oppressed.'⁸¹ He often, however, identified 'the country' with the establishment and the landed interest of a country; thus, France, properly speaking, was largely in exile. This tended to disparage the royalist sector of the lower orders, left behind in France. These he brushed aside as, at least temporarily, having no 'independent and deliberative existence'—they had no power and so were at the mercy of the Jacobins.⁸² They were therefore irrelevant to the 'moral essence' which was the country.

As to what you talk of the *people* of France, I know of no such *people*. That community, as it now stands, is composed [of] an handful of Tyrants and some Millions of the most Abject Slaves ever heard of in the world. The opinion of these millions is not so much as dust in the balance. I always except the Royalists, a good many of whom still exist, and have not at all abandond their old principles; but having been themselves treacherously abandond, and even persecuted, by the Allies—they are for the present confounded in the general Mass.⁸³

⁷⁹ *Ephesians* 6:12. For the 'war crusaders', see ch. 3.

⁸⁰ Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.50-1; 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', p.465.

⁸¹ 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', p.462. See also Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 22 September 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 432.

⁸² 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', p.465.

⁸³ Burke to William Lushington, 26 October 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 100.

Burke watched with a mixture of revulsion and horror as revolutionary France welded itself into a military nation-state. 'It is military in its principle, in its maxims, in its spirit, and in all its movements. The state has dominion and conquest for its sole objects; dominion over minds by proselytism, over bodies by arms.'⁸⁴

The British ministry, according to Burke, was fighting the war on the wrong basis altogether.⁸⁵ The conflict was primarily with the French Revolutionary *system*, not simply with French ambition or arrogance *per se*, which were but manifestations of the revolutionary ideology in practice. The attack on the United Provinces, the attempt to upset the European balance of power and the declaration of war on Britain were all good grounds for war, but in themselves they were little more than evidence for the real ground of war, the revolutionary system of France—'a posture, which was in itself a declaration of war against mankind.'⁸⁶ Burke enlarged on this in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*:

As I understood the matter, we were at war not with its conduct, but with its existence; convinced that its existence and its hostility were the same...The faction is not local or territorial...It exists in every country in Europe; and among all orders of men in every country, who look up to France as to a common head. The centre is there...Everywhere else the faction is militant; in France it is triumphant...It is not France extending a foreign empire over other nations; it is a sect aiming at universal empire, and beginning with the conquest of France.⁸⁷

The contest against revolutionary France was therefore no ordinary war—it was a *new* kind of war. Burke wrote to Pitt: 'I pray...that you may not fall into the one great Errour from whence there is no return...that you may never be led to think, that this War is, in its principle, or in any thing that belongs to it, the least resembling any other War...'.⁸⁸ Britain was struggling against a set of political and religious doctrines, not just against men. Thus,

We are in a war of a *peculiar* nature. It is not with an ordinary community, which is hostile or friendly as passion or as interest may veer about: not with a state which makes war through wantonness, and abandons it through lassitude. We are at war with a system, which, by its essence, is inimical to all other governments, and which makes peace or war, as peace and war may best contribute to their subversion. It is with an *armed doctrine* that we are at war.⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Second 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.288.

⁸⁵ Burke to Windham, 24 October 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 460-1.

⁸⁶ First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.260.

⁸⁷ Second 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.265-7.

⁸⁸ Burke to Pitt, 28 October 1795 [private], *Burke Corr.*, viii, 331.

⁸⁹ First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.199.

French arms and principles were 'things inseperable' and 'went as those of Mahomed, the Rights of man in one hand, and the Sword in the other'.⁹⁰

This was the first war since the wars of religion to be fought between competing ideologies. The principles at stake were those of the old social order of Europe, rooted in the protection of property. Even in defending the clergy in the *Reflections*, Burke's main charge was the confiscation of Church property, as a crime against human property rights rather than as sacrilege, or rather than objecting to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy as a secular interference in the Church's spiritual jurisdiction.⁹¹ Nevertheless, Christianity itself was also basic to the ideology of the established social order of Europe, and here, too, Burke found the Jacobins at their work of destruction:

Look at all the proceedings of the National Assembly from the first day of declaring itself in 1789, to this very hour, and you will find full half of their business to be directly on this subject. In fact it is the spirit of the whole...This religious war is not a controversy between sect and sect as formerly, but a war against all sects and all religions.⁹²

In Burke's view, as Gerald Chapman has pointed out, since he thought that religious belief was the basis of civil society, 'the armed doctrine was really religious in its substance, political in its scale and aspirations...'.⁹³ This was the nature of the conflict in which Britain was involved.

Whether overtly political or religious, the fanaticism of the revolutionaries alarmed Burke: '...it is now obvious to the world, that a theory concerning government may become as much a cause of fanaticism as a *dogma* in religion.'⁹⁴

The Jacobin Revolution is carried on by men of no rank, of no consideration, of wild, savage minds, full of levity, arrogance, and presumption, without morals, without probity, without prudence. What have they then to supply their innumerable defects, and to make them terrible even to the firmest minds? *One* thing, and *one* only—but that one thing is worth a thousand—they have *energy*...this dreadful and portentous energy, restrained by no consideration of God or man, that is always vigilant, always on the attack, that allows itself no repose, and suffers none to rest an hour with impunity...⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Burke to Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 307, 310.

⁹¹ Frederick Dreyer, 'Burke's Religion' in *Studies in Burke and His Time*, 17 (1976), p.211; *Reflections*, pp.252-63. See also Schofield, 'English Conservative Thought', pp.157-8.

⁹² 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', p.485.

⁹³ John MacCunn, *The Political Philosophy of Burke* (London, 1913), p.113; Chapman, *The Practical Imagination*, p.229.

⁹⁴ 'Appeal', p.98.

⁹⁵ 'Remarks on the Policy of the Allies', p.460.

The force of the Revolution seemed unnatural to Burke. 'That country has but too much life in it, when everything around is so disposed to tameness and languor.'⁹⁶ He described this energy as a fire which was constantly at work: sometimes blazing forth, sometimes covered by its ashes, but always living and burning: 'The whole Aedifice of antient Europe is shaken by the Earthquake caused by that fire...'. This force or energy (one of whose elements, he claimed, was the French 'immortal hatred of England'⁹⁷) was the more frightening because it was the sole resource of revolutionary France. 'The state is all in all,' Burke noted, and everything was devoted to producing that energy, and everything which the Revolution achieved was produced by that energy. While the republican government could produce nothing but misery and anarchy at home, it still possessed 'the malignant power of great offensive operations' abroad.⁹⁸

This new type of war, produced by the evil principles of Jacobinism combined with the novel and unnatural energy of the Revolution, created a new style of warfare.

I cannot persuade myself, that this War bears any the least resemblance (other than that it is a War) to any that has ever existed in the world—I cannot persuade myself, that any examples or any reasonings drawn from other Wars and other politicks are at all applicable to it—and I truly and sincerely think, that all other wars and all other politicks have been the games of Children in comparison to it.⁹⁹

Everything was an unknown. As early as May 1791 Burke was predicting that 'the new school of murder and barbarism, set up in Paris, having destroyed (so far as in it lies) all the other manners and principles which have hitherto civilized Europe, will destroy also the mode of civilized war...'.¹⁰⁰ It was warfare conducted without a sense of honour or integrity; no efforts would be spared by the Jacobins (who were now inured to warfare) to gain their ends, and Britain could take no conventions of eighteenth-century warfare for granted.¹⁰¹

Crucially, this was total warfare. Revolutionary France was throwing everything it had into its war effort, and would stop at nothing to achieve its ends—it

⁹⁶ 'Heads for Consideration', p.391; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.191.

⁹⁷ Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.80.

⁹⁸ Burke to William Burke, 3 September 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 191; Second 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.288-9; *P.H.*, xxx, 1011, 17 June 1793.

⁹⁹ Burke to Capt. Woodford, 13 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 522.

¹⁰⁰ 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly', p.320.

¹⁰¹ Burke to Mrs. John Crewe, post 11 August 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 301; *P.H.*, xxx, 386, 12 February 1793.

would conquer or be crushed. Burke realized this, and saw that a similar commitment from Britain would be necessary if France was to be defeated. 'The hell-hounds of war,' he predicted in 1791, 'on all sides, will be uncoupled and unmuzzled.'¹⁰² In this new system or principle of war, even peace would be pressed into service by the unscrupulous Jacobins—they would be working towards universal empire whether through force in time of hostility or by intrigue and subversion in time of 'peace'.¹⁰³ Finally, Burke stressed that such a conflict as this would inevitably be long. No dangerous power in the past had ever been reduced to acceptability without a long war, and revolutionary France was no ordinarily dangerous power.¹⁰⁴

IV

Naturally, Burke's views on the reasons for the war and its aims and nature governed his opinion of how Britain should fight it. This included views on general strategy, of which his main concern was that Britain ought to give full support to the French counter-revolutionaries, and views on how the political nation ought to be managed and to conduct itself in waging such a war.

Strategically, it was again necessary that the ministry should recognize that this was a new kind of war and understand the nature of the enemy. It was incumbent upon the administration to think the issues through properly in the light of these facts. In his *Letter to William Elliot, Esq.* (May 1795), he accused the British of superficial thinking: 'People talk of war, or cry for peace—Have they to the bottom considered the questions either of war, or peace, upon the scale of the existing world? No, I fear they have not.'¹⁰⁵

Had the issues been considered properly, according to Burke, strategy would have been focused correctly and energy and resources used effectively. He believed that Britain ought to be fighting the revolutionary system, not France itself; but, since this system was based in France, the centre of Europe, he insisted that it must be defeated there. Burke urgently wanted a military strike at Paris and the destruction there of Jacobinism once and for all before it became entrenched. 'We are at war with a principle, and an example, which there is no shutting out by Fortresses or excluding by Territorial Limits. No lines of demarcation can bound the Jacobin Empire. It must

¹⁰² 'Letter to a Member of the National Assembly', p.320.

¹⁰³ 'Thoughts on French Affairs', p.352.

¹⁰⁴ First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.229.

¹⁰⁵ Burke to John Coxie Hippisley, 8 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 513; 'Letter to William Elliot, Esq.' (1795), *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 43.

be extirpated in the place of its origin, or it will not be confined to that place.’¹⁰⁶ All chasing after objects elsewhere in Europe or further afield, in the East or West Indies, was therefore a waste of time and resources. This policy made sense militarily, too: ‘France is strong at arm’s length. She is, I am convinced, weakness itself, if you can get to grapple with her internally.’¹⁰⁷

When important conquests were made in France, such as Toulon, Burke insisted that they should be held in the name of the French monarchy, although under the civil and military influence of the allies, to speed the counter-revolution and to prevent quarrels among the allies.¹⁰⁸ In fact, the whole conflict ought to be fought in the name of the French King. Not to recognize Louis XVII and the princes, Provence (later Louis XVIII) and Artois, was ‘virtually to acknowledge the usurpation’ and to justify the judicial murder of Louis XVI. The capture of Toulon by Lord Hood in the name of the French monarchy gave Burke pleasure because ‘the War was at length put upon a proper footing; the only rational manly and honourable footing it can be placed upon.’¹⁰⁹

Burke constantly criticized the British administration for inadequately supporting the French counter-revolutionaries:

It is then plain by a conduct which overturns a thousand declarations, that we take the royalists of France only as an instrument of some convenience in a temporary hostility with the Jacobins, but that we regard those atheistic and murderous barbarians as the bona fide possessors of the soil of France.¹¹⁰

He tried hard to make the British administration see that supporting the French royalist cause was in their interests, since it gave them internal allies in France, as well as being the only just or viable means of fighting Jacobinism.¹¹¹ He urged that the allies should make good use of the potential of the French counter-revolutionaries. ‘I have a strong opinion that Frenchmen are best for French affairs,’ he told Windham. ‘I have an opinion too, which I don’t know whether I can make equally evident; it is, that the emigrants have better parts than the people among whom they have taken refuge.’¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Burke to the Comte de Mercy-Argenteau, c.6 August 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 387.

¹⁰⁷ Burke to Windham, 18 August 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 413. Nevertheless, Burke was sometimes unable to resist giving ministers advice on which colonies should be attacked first—see the postscript to his letter to Henry Dundas of 8 October 1793 in *Burke Corr.*, vii, 446.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Remarks on the Policy of the Allies’, p.482.

¹⁰⁹ Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 22 September 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 434; see also Burke to William Burke, 15 September 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 427.

¹¹⁰ ‘Remarks on the Policy of the Allies’, pp.455-6.

¹¹¹ Burke to Mrs. John Crewe, post 11 August 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 303.

¹¹² Burke to Windham, 8 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 514. It is true that Burke was not happy with the government’s main beneficiary of its pro-royalist aid in 1795, Joseph, Comte de Puisaye,

The allies and the French royalists, Burke insisted, were mutually dependent. The *émigrés* especially understood the country better and had most interest in it, but they were not nearly strong enough to effect a counter-revolution on their own. They must be consulted and employed. He estimated that there must be at least seventy thousand deprived civil and ecclesiastical proprietors; much of their force of ten thousand which had served with the Prussian troops in 1792 still existed and would willingly act again. They were also by far the best people to lead and inspire the royalists in France.¹¹³

The fact that the conflict was in a basic sense a religious war presented another reason for using the *émigrés*. The French royalist clergy should be used to the full in helping to wipe out atheistic Jacobinism, and it had been senseless to forbid the entry of the bishop of Toulon once the port had been taken by the allies. Burke reserved severe censure for those who hesitated on doctrinal grounds to use the French Catholic clergy. The Jacobins had declared war on all religion, he said—it was not a time for Christians to be squabbling among themselves—and he claimed that the Protestant minority in France had actually colluded with the revolutionaries and had thus put themselves beyond countenance.

The French clergy are the great instrument, by which this End is to be accomplishd—and if we can make any serious impression upon France by Arms in the beginning, this Clergy will be of more effect in the progress of the Business, than an hundred thousand Soldiers.¹¹⁴

As for the conduct and management of the British political nation in waging war against revolutionary France, Burke made four main points. Britain must fight wholeheartedly; it must fight as a united nation, as far as possible; resolute leadership was vital; and public opinion must be properly managed and used.

‘Humanly speaking,’ Burke wrote in the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, ‘that people which bounds its efforts only with its being, must give the law to that nation which will not push its opposition beyond its convenience.’ It was vital that Britain should at least match the force and spirit of revolutionary France. The crimes and madness of the Jacobin régime, far from weakening the vigour of France, were integral to it; but novelty was not the only possible source of zeal. Burke called for a

because of Puisaye’s early support for the Revolution and the 1791 Constitution—‘put the saddle on the right horse’, he berated Windham—but he became more enthusiastic about Puisaye’s leadership of the Chouan counter-revolution as time went on, judging it necessary to make use of all who would fight for the right side [Burke to William Elliot, 21 June 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 268-9; Burke to Windham, 27 June 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 273-4].

¹¹³ ‘Remarks on the Policy of the Allies’, pp.474-9, 470.

¹¹⁴ *ibid.*, pp.442-4; Burke to Lord Buckingham, 1 December 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 498.

passionate defence of the laws, the constitution, the institutions, the social character and the liberties of Britain;¹¹⁵ he paced up and down the pages of his letters and publications with distressed impatience at the ministry's caution and lack of urgency. On 19 November 1793, he wrote to Sir Gilbert Elliot:

To say the truth, I am more full of anxiety than I can well express. The operation of our remedies to the French Pestilence is slow. The Course has begun late. It is pursued without any true knowledge of its specifick Nature. It has been tardily applied—whilst the disorder moves with the pace of a Giant...¹¹⁶

It was a 'meanness of Spirit' in the ministry's conduct of the war which had 'brought on all our misfortunes and rendered all our resources fruitless.' His own extravagance of spirit would have thought 'our last penny well given and our last drop of blood well shed' for the sake of seeing Jacobinism destroyed, and so ardent was his zeal for this that it was almost beyond his comprehension that the ministry could engage in the conflict in any other way.¹¹⁷ Defensiveness, he pleaded, was not sufficient to keep the Jacobins at bay because the attack was not only external, but came also via internal corruption ('a sort of dry rot').¹¹⁸ No physical defence could shield a country from the effects of the example of French subversion. The ministry's Aliens Bill, for instance, was patently inadequate against Jacobinism. It might keep suspected foreigners out of Britain, but there was nothing to stop British subjects travelling to France, becoming infected with republican corruption, and returning to spread the disease even more effectively than French visitors could, whose speech betrayed them.¹¹⁹ Burke also roundly criticized the policy of recruiting large numbers of men for home service only. This was much easier than recruiting for foreign service, and accorded with the administration's defensiveness in the middle years of the decade as Britain became increasingly isolated in the struggle against France. To Burke, however, the policy of keeping so many of the armed forces inert at home drained them of their glory and, more importantly, was based on a wholly erroneous conception of how to defend the country effectively. In his view, it seemed to be a plain statement of abandoning the war and maintaining only passive defences. 'I suppose it is the first time,' he wrote to Fitzwilliam in December 1796, 'that an army

¹¹⁵ First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.195; Burke to Richard Burke, jr., 17 October 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 272; 'Letter to William Elliot, Esq.', pp.41-2.

¹¹⁶ *Burke Corr.*, vii, 489.

¹¹⁷ Burke to Windham, 30 December 1794, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 105; Burke to French Laurence, 12 May 1797, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 338; Burke to General Dalton, 6 August 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 385.

¹¹⁸ 'Thoughts on French Affairs', p.369.

¹¹⁹ Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.109.

of near 100, 000 men (no fewer are here and in Ireland, under various denominations of old and new Militia and fencibles) who are under an absolute legal disability of being employed against the Enemy except in one case only and that absolutely in his Choice. This is sad work.’¹²⁰ A defensive alliance with the other European states was more foolish still, since in this their discordant interests were far more difficult to deal with than in a common offensive, which provided a focus. ‘Mercy and Breteuil are at the Head of this Hopeful Scheme,’ he told his son in October 1792. ‘We add our nothing to their inanity. They propose, that all Europe shall form a Cordon to hedge in the Cuckoo. They are to form a defensive Alliance to hinder the propagation of French principles!’¹²¹ In war, Burke argued, ‘something must be risked—and perhaps all our present dangers have arisen not from want of precautions, but from having used too many of them...’.¹²²

He also complained that advantage was not taken of allied victories, such as the capture of Toulon, as it should have been, due to the lack of British and allied conviction about the nature and aim of the war.

...it is not from our defeats, that my hopes are damped, but from our Successes. If we had been only beaten, better conduct and greater force, with our share of the Chances, might set us right again. But I see nothing, which all the Successes we have had, and much greater than I dare to look for, can do towards bringing things to the conclusion we wish, as long as the plan we have pursued and still pursue, is persevered in.¹²³

It was an extremely inefficient way to wage war. ‘The greatest skill conducting the greatest military apparatus has been employed; but it has been worse than uselessly employed, through the false policy of the war.’ He criticized the fact that the King of Prussia’s subsidy was nearly three times as large as the Emperor’s loan, yet Austria was contributing far more to the allied campaign—another inefficient use of resources. He was impatient, too, with military errors. Brunswick’s defeat in September 1792 could not be attributed to sickness and the weather alone—‘there is a great deal of superfluous humiliation in this business, a perfect prodigality of disgrace.’¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Burke to Fitzwilliam, 7 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, IX, 149. See also the Third ‘Letter on a Regicide Peace’ (1797), *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 357-9; Burke to French Laurence, 18 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, IX, 118; Burke to Mrs. John Crewe, 23 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, IX, 130; Burke to Mrs. John Crewe, 27 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, IX, 204; Burke to George Canning, 1 March 1797, *Burke Corr.*, IX, 268.

¹²¹ ‘Heads for Consideration’, pp.401-2; Burke to Richard Burke, jr., 17 October 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 272.

¹²² Burke to Lord Loughborough, 12 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 518.

¹²³ Burke to Windham, c.10 November 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 480.

¹²⁴ Second ‘Letter on a Regicide Peace’, p.269; ‘Heads for Consideration’, p.396.

To fight wholeheartedly, of course, meant not just the elimination of inefficiency and hesitancy, but also to act with pride and determination, the pride and determination of the British people throughout their history. 'To a people who have once been proud and great, and great because they were proud,' Burke warned, 'a change in the national spirit is the most terrible of all revolutions.' In his first *Letter on a Regicide Peace* (1796), Burke referred to the writings of John Brown, whose *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Times* (1757-58) had expressed his concern that the national character had become preponderantly frivolous and effeminate, partly due to a sense of inferiority beside the French. Burke feared that the present government's lack of resolution might subdue the national spirit once more. He acknowledged the enormity of the struggle, but forbade any return to a spirit of inferiority:

To us it is a Colossus which bestrides our channel. It has one foot on a foreign shore, the other upon the British soil. Thus advantaged, if it can at all exist, it must finally prevail. Nothing can so completely ruin any of the old governments, ours in particular, as the acknowledgement, directly, or by implication, of any kind of superiority in this new power.¹²⁵

As battle must be taken to the French wholeheartedly, so, secondly, it must be done with unity. There must be unity among the allied nations and unity within Britain itself. In the *Heads for Consideration on the Present State of Affairs* (November 1792), Burke urged the British ministry to placate, conciliate, support, encourage and stir up the other European states so that one great confederacy might be formed against France, and he continued to insist that, just as the rest of Europe was ineffective against revolutionary France without Britain's cooperation and leadership, so neither could Britain 'pretend to cope with France but as connected with the body of Christendom.' In this, Burke included the papacy and the papal states, and he wanted Britain to put bigotry aside and make use of another potential ally.¹²⁶ He did acknowledge the failings of the other states as allies against the Jacobins, and often denounced their conduct of the war in scathing terms—but this, he insisted, did not excuse Britain from making every possible effort to hold the confederacy together.¹²⁷

So far as Britain itself was concerned, Burke did his best to elicit an integrated and total war effort of unity and full cooperation from the political nation, that its whole weight might be thrown against Jacobin France. He called for unity within the

¹²⁵ First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.188, 192, 200.

¹²⁶ 'Heads for Consideration', pp.399-400; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.196; Burke to John Coxé Hippisley, 3 October 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 440.

¹²⁷ Burke to Richard Burke, jr., 6,7 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 284.

royal family (that is, between George III and his profligate son, the Prince of Wales), between the ministry and opposition in Parliament (so long as it was a union in favour of a full-blooded war on Jacobinism, with no compromise on the part of the ministry), and between Protestants and Roman Catholics in Ireland. He also worked hard for the coalition of the Portland Whigs with the ministry which was eventually achieved in 1794.

Against this Grand and dreadful Evil of our time (I do not love to cheat myself or others) I do not know any solid Security whatsoever: But I am quite certain, that what will come nearest to it, is to interest as many as you can in the present order of things, religiously, civilly, politically—by all the ties and principles by which mankind are held. This is like to be effectual policy.¹²⁸

It was necessary to oppose a systematic support for the government to the French system of anarchy; not 'a layer of support and a layer of opposition', but full and deliberate support.¹²⁹

Burke saw the religious unity of the country as holding particular importance. He accorded priority of status to the established Church of England as the historical expression of the national unity of beliefs and values, and of the present corporate worship of the commonwealth, including both governors and governed. Nevertheless, he also valued its breadth and suitability for moderation between the various other 'sects', something he saw as a national preference because the established Church had evolved in such a way as to favour toleration.¹³⁰ In the war against revolutionary France, religious unity was more important than ever, since he regarded it as fundamentally a war for the existence of religion, which was the basis of European civilization. A civil war amongst the enemies of Jacobinism would do their cause no good. All the denominations of European religion shared a common foundation, he argued, and they must all be supported, 'or they must all fall in the crash of a common Ruin.'¹³¹ He was especially bitter about the oppression of Roman Catholics in Ireland. 'Instead of preparing to resist the French,' he told French

¹²⁸ Quotation from Burke to William Smith, 29 January 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 298; Burke to Fitzwilliam, 21 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 312; Burke to Capt. Woodford, 13 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 522.

¹²⁹ *P.H.*, xxx, 181, 28 December 1792.

¹³⁰ Chapman, *Edmund Burke. The Practical Imagination*, pp.85-93; Burke to unknown, 26 January 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 215.

¹³¹ Burke to Fitzwilliam, 10 February 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 146; Burke to William Smith, 29 January 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 130-1. John Dinwiddy argues that Burke, while valuing national religious institutions on religious grounds as well as for social and political reasons, was very little interested in their doctrinal differences, whether denominational or even between religions [John Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism', in Mark Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (London, 1991), p.44].

Laurence, 'they are making war with all might upon Popery...'.¹³² This sense of injustice and frustration grew until he saw in all the failures of the British administration to conduct the war in a manner satisfactory to him, a scheme against Catholicism on an international scale, a 'Western Crusade against Popery'.¹³³

Thirdly, the political leadership of Britain in the crusade against Jacobin France was of great concern to Burke. 'We must have leaders,' he wrote in the first *Letter on a Regicide Peace*. 'If none will undertake to lead us right, we shall find guides who will contrive to conduct us to shame and ruin.'¹³⁴ While recognizing that they 'meant well' and were not inactive, and indeed that they formed 'by far the most honest and by far the wisest system of administration in Europe', so that 'their fall would be no trivial calamity',¹³⁵ Burke nevertheless became increasingly disillusioned with Pitt and his cabinet in their conduct of the war. He compared the likely effects of a ministry headed by Fox to those of the Pitt administration in his *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority* (1793) and concluded that, even in a worst case scenario, Pitt was at least the lesser of two evils. 'Mr. Pitt may be the worst of men, and Mr. Fox may be the best; but, at present, the former is in the interests of his country, and of the order of things long established in Europe: Mr. Fox is not.' By November 1796, however, he was telling Lord Fitzwilliam that 'Mr. Pitt, except for the direct Objects of his own power, is not a bold Politician. Even for them I do not think that Great Courage is his Character'; and three months later he wrote to French Laurence that there was little to choose between him and Fox.

I call them Sophisters and declaimers because they have melted down all the faculties that God has given them into those characters; and in proportion to their perfection in those they sink in every other respect. Neither of them have even the shadow of a statesman.¹³⁶

Burke's complaint was that Pitt did not declare for the anti-Jacobin cause sufficiently distinctly, nor did he pour everything into upholding the European allies and the French princes and their supporters. His theory of the war was as inspiring, as J. Holland Rose pointed out, as the practice of it was impossible for ministers contending with the disabilities of self-interested and short-sighted European allies and

¹³² Burke to French Laurence, 8 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 151.

¹³³ Burke to the Rev. Thomas Hussey, post 9 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 163-5.

¹³⁴ 'Letters on a Regicide Peace', *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 199.

¹³⁵ Burke to Lord Loughborough, 12 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 517; 'Letter to William Elliot, Esq.', p.43.

¹³⁶ 'Observations on the Conduct of the Minority', p.452; Burke to Fitzwilliam, 20 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 121; Burke to French Laurence, 1 March 1797, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 266.

bitterly divided French royalists.¹³⁷ It was easy to criticize, as a spectator; in his passionate zeal for his cause, Burke seemed not to understand the exigencies of Cabinet office.

Finally, Burke was convinced of the importance of public opinion and of the need for the government to use it and control it. In 1770 he had argued that the confidence of the people was 'the great and only foundation of government.' He believed that the minds of the people (that is, he made clear, the minds of the economically independent and therefore politically significant people) were as much a national resource as men, money and ships, and a resource whose significance was entirely unappreciated by the government.¹³⁸ He was persuaded of the relationship between ideas and political activities, and he realized that this was what made the French Revolution dangerous. It was therefore essential that the government should make the effort to woo and hold the loyalty of public opinion for the safety of the social order. An enthusiasm for the war must be raised in the nation to counter the Jacobin fanaticism and to bear the country through the hardships of a long struggle.

He saw that it was not enough for the government simply to expect a loyal and patriotic spirit to arise from the mere fact of being at war with France; this was naturally produced in the first few months of the war and, thanks to the quality of the British national spirit, continued to exert its force for much longer than was deserved by the government, which neglected it shamefully:

My clear opinion is, that if you excite a spirit in the people, which, in part at least, is ever the effect of art and management, it will carry you through every thing. If you do not, you will sink under the very weight of your own work. You, and the people you neglect, will together have the lot of those who will choose to go to sleep on the edge of Dover cliff.¹³⁹

'I am sure that so far from endeavouring to excite this spirit, nothing has been omitted to flatten and lower it,' he lamented to Mrs. Crewe.¹⁴⁰

When Burke wrote about how Britain ought to fight the war against France, he urged the use of *new* means of fighting for the sake of saving the *old* order of Europe. 'New wine' could not be dealt with in the 'old Leathern Bottles'.¹⁴¹ His cry for a 'manly' leadership and his exhortations to the general political public of Britain for

¹³⁷ O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, p.521; Holland Rose, 'The Struggle with Revolutionary France', p.266.

¹³⁸ Burke to French Laurence, 18 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 119; Burke to French Laurence, [21 January 1795], *Burke Corr.*, viii, 124.

¹³⁹ Burke to Windham, 30 December 1794, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 104.

¹⁴⁰ Burke to Mrs. John Crewe, 23 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 130.

¹⁴¹ Burke to Windham, c.2 February 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 135.

wholeheartedness and unity of spirit were alike pleas for a national conviction and fervour which would subordinate everything to the supreme end of extinguishing Jacobin principles from Europe. He involved the public in his struggle against the French Revolution for the sake of its brute force; he realized, as Cobban pointed out, that such a movement as Jacobinism had primarily to be fought on the ground of opinion.¹⁴² In this sense he was calling for the force of nationality to be exerted in a total war against the French revolutionaries.

V

Edmund Burke was in many ways a most humane man. 'The blood of man,' he wrote, 'should never be shed but to redeem the blood of man. It is well shed for our family, for our friends, for our God, for our country, for our kind. The rest is vanity; the rest is crime.'¹⁴³ He was not a war-monger, and he would not have advocated war against France had he not believed it to be absolutely necessary and a lesser evil than allowing the French Revolution to establish itself in Europe. He had no patience, therefore, with any suggestion of peace with France before Jacobinism had been utterly destroyed and the monarchy restored. His four *Letters on a Regicide Peace* were written and published in the years 1795-7 because of the attraction that negotiations with France held for the British administration during those difficult years. Much of his private correspondence was also taken up by the same concern. He argued against peace with Jacobin France on principle, on the basis of the consequences he predicted from it, and from various other pragmatic considerations.

First, Burke believed that Britain ought not to make peace with revolutionary France on principle, since the original grounds for war had not been removed. Jacobinism remained and any termination of the war at this point would merely achieve 'a Sansculottick peace'—it would be to abandon mankind to the mercy of the revolutionaries. 'Our moral world will be wasted by this peace,' he told Windham in January 1796. It was a 'sedative remedy', cowardly and superficial.¹⁴⁴

The point which the ministry and the majority of the political nation seemed infuriatingly unable to grasp was that Britain was not dealing with any ordinary power, and therefore the ordinary conventions of war and peace were irrelevant and ineffective. To suppose that a stable government in France would guarantee a stable

¹⁴² Cobban, *The Revolt against the Eighteenth Century*, p.128.

¹⁴³ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.118.

¹⁴⁴ Burke to Henry Grattan, 20 March 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 208; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.195; Burke to Windham, 19 January 1796, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 378; Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.60.

peace was to betray a complete misunderstanding of the French Revolution, based on the fallacy that France's hostility to other nations proceeded from its own internal anarchy, which its rulers were not strong enough to master. France was not an anarchy, although it was certainly anarchic; it was a despotism of the worst kind—'a series of short-lived tyrannies'. Burke argued that the Revolution was neither made nor sustained by the people, but was the work of a revolutionary 'cabal', and since the war was not the result of popular tumult, it followed that the arrival of relative domestic stability and order would not necessarily produce peace with the other nations.¹⁴⁵

It was vital that the Revolution itself be crushed and wiped out before peace was made with France, because until that was accomplished, there could *be* no peace in any meaningful sense of the term. 'If I am right in my ideas of this new republic,' he wrote, 'the different states of peace and war will make no difference in her pursuits.... Enmity to us and to all civilized nations is wrought into the very stamina of its constitution.' In peace, France would merely pursue through intrigue and proselytism what now she pursued with the sword, while Britain and the allies would have no effectual means of resistance. The allies were complacently waging war under an error of grotesque proportions, namely, that they could end it whenever they chose, simply by deciding to forget French crimes. Rather, 'we are at war with a system, which, by its essence, is inimical to all other governments, and which makes peace or war, as peace and war may best contribute to their subversion.' A peace with revolutionary France would have 'a thousand barking monsters of a thousand wars in its womb,' he told French Laurence. The worst thing Britain could do would be to acknowledge the superiority of the revolutionary power, whether directly or implicitly, by soliciting peace or yielding to its terms.¹⁴⁶

Moreover, while any retreat was dishonouring to Britain—he called the withdrawal of the Navy from the Mediterranean in autumn 1796 'the most disgraceful Event, and possibly the most fatal that has ever occurred in our History'—France had declared war, and her obstinate arrogance must not be met with importunate British self-abasement in seeking peace. Every fresh attempt to establish negotiations after the French rejection of Britain's first approach in 1796 could only be motivated by a masochistic desire to be mortified, so far as Burke could see, since there was no reason to believe that there had been any change in French policy. Equally shamefully, Britain's pursuit of peace with France ('such an improvident and stupid selfishness')

¹⁴⁵ *Burke Corr.*, viii, p.xviii; Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.86-7.

¹⁴⁶ Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.104; 'Thoughts on French Affairs', p.352; Burke to French Laurence, 11 April 1797, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 306; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.199-200.

would betray the allies. His third *Letter on a Regicide Peace* (1797) discussed and condemned the official pledge given by the British government 'in the face of all Europe' of good faith towards France, and readiness to negotiate whenever France was willing. No European power had demanded that Britain go through such 'judicial purgations and ordeals'—no European power was remotely interested in British good faith towards France. What they desperately wanted and needed was assurances of British fidelity to the alliance against France. 'No man,' Burke wrote to Pitt, 'can more cordially pray for your bringing this arduous contest to an happy and honourable termination than I do,' but the necessary prerequisite for that termination was the total extirpation of Jacobinism.¹⁴⁷

Burke also argued against peace on the basis of the consequences he predicted from it. He complained that those who cried out for it did not realize what it was that they were demanding. 'God send that by one step apparently dictated by precaution you may not do...the rashest thing in the world and in a peace (a terrible misnomer) find infinitely more perils than even in a disastrous War...' he wrote to Dundas. His prognosis was indeed gloomy. Britain's very eagerness to make peace would cost it dearly, he forecast. If the revolutionaries noticed this anxiety, they would exploit it mercilessly and make Britain pay heavily for peace. 'Nothing can quell the manliness, or fatigue the perseverance of our determined poltroonery. We have a sort of eagerness for disgrace, a sort of alacrity in sinking,' he mourned.¹⁴⁸

To make peace was ultimately to cooperate with the French plan for universal revolution. Not only would it remove physical resistance to the French, but it would also open the British door to the Revolution. The French government, Burke warned, 'has thought proper to invite ours to lay by its unjust hatred, and to listen to the voice of humanity as taught by their example.' He had received a letter of Windham's, he told his friend, when he had been 'half the Channel over in Mr. Erskines Pamphlet' (that is, Thomas Erskine's newly-published and highly successful *View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France* which argued for a speedy peace). If the British government yielded to the enemy abroad, it could not hope to subdue conspirators at home. Lord Auckland had argued in his pamphlet, *Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War in the Fourth Week of October, 1795*, that peace was quite safe: Britain could be cured by French diseases, in that the distempers of the

¹⁴⁷ Burke to William Lushington, 26 October 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 100; Burke to Windham, 11 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 109; First and Third 'Letters on a Regicide Peace', pp.201; 317-8, 298.

¹⁴⁸ Burke to William Burke, 11 November 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 109; Burke to Dundas, 4 November 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 337; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.193; Burke to Henry Grattan, 2, 3 March 1795, *Burke Corr.*, viii, 164; Burke to Fitzwilliam, 23 September 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 89; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.214.

French constitution must have taught the British people a healthy respect for and pride in their own constitution. Not so, retorted Burke in his fourth *Letter on a Regicide Peace*, noting the riots and the attempt on the King's life which had taken place the week after the publication of Auckland's pamphlet and, indeed, the mass meeting held on 26 October 1795, which, he claimed, had declared against the life of George III. Peace could only weaken Britain and the allies internally to the advantage of France.¹⁴⁹

Besides contending against peace on the principle that the grounds for war remained intact and on the basis of what seemed to him its inevitable consequences, Burke's polemical battery supplied various other arguments. The very insults returned by the French to British overtures, for instance, were cause enough for British pride to determine to stop at nothing to crush such insolence. In the first *Letter on a Regicide Peace*, Burke enumerated four stages of British approaches and their rejection by France: Bird's mission to solicit mercy for the Duc de Choiseul in 1795; the speech from the British throne and the direct message from the Crown and the two Houses of Parliament offering to negotiate for peace at the end of the same year; William Wickham's mission to Basle in March 1796 to sound out French willingness to hold talks; and the shameful attempts (to Burke's mind) to achieve the mediation of the King of Prussia and the Danish minister at Paris later in that year. All had been rejected by the French on the grounds of British insincerity and bad faith; a cover, Burke believed, for the fact that the French despised the idea of a congress rather than their own dictation of the terms of peace. Later, he depicted Lord Malmesbury's return to Britain after his failed mission to establish negotiations as the return of a 'Mongrel...whipped back to the Kennel yelping and with his Tail between his Legs.' The apparent placidity of the ministry in response to this barrage of insults was incomprehensible to Burke.¹⁵⁰

The enforced union of Spain with France in 1795 was another strong reason against seeking peace. Spain's cession of its part of San Domingo to France completely upset the balance of power in the West Indies ('and indeed everywhere else', he added morosely), and effectively gave France access to all the Spanish colonies. It was, however, the complete union of France and Spain which such a transaction indicated that Burke found 'truly alarming', for it starkly demonstrated the progress of the Jacobin empire. 'Here we have, formed, a new, unlooked-for,

¹⁴⁹ First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.247, 198; Burke to Windham, 12 February [1797], *Burke Corr.*, ix, 240; Fourth 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.60; see also Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution*, p.23.

¹⁵⁰ Fourth and First 'Letters on a Regicide Peace', pp.80-1; 201-216; Burke to Windham, 25 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 205.

monstrous, heterogeneous alliance; a double-natured monster; republic above, and monarchy below.’¹⁵¹

Characteristically, Burke often used arguments from the history of British foreign policy to counter the demand for peace with France. Frugality and pacificity were not necessarily guarantees of British liberty, he admonished Auckland; that liberty had often been defended best by warlike and prodigal princes. He dreamed of a British army comparable with ‘the least of those by which, in former times, we so gloriously asserted our place as protectors...at the head of the great commonwealth of Europe.’ Indeed, for the first time since ‘the days of our Edwards and Henrys’, British allies were in the heartland of France itself—yet Britain was talking of peace. Things had also been different in the days of Louis XIV: then, England had ‘considered herself as embodied with Europe’ and that ‘nothing in foreign affairs was foreign to her’.¹⁵²

It was perilous to assume, as the ministry seemed to do, that the failure of negotiations would stir up British patriotism. ‘A long habit of humiliation does not seem a very good preparative to manly and vigorous sentiment.’ It was a gamble not worth the risk, for it missed the point that neither Parliament nor the great majority of the British people, as Burke claimed, had any desire for peace with revolutionary France. It would therefore have quite the opposite effect, that of dampening their ardour in the cause, by dispiriting and humiliating them. Burke insisted that there had been no call for peace until autumn 1795, when Auckland’s pamphlet, the speech from the throne and various reports in the newspapers had drawn attention to it as a possibility. He clung to the hope that at least the British people must see things clearly, even though their government appeared to have taken leave of its senses. This was

a war which the people consider, not as a war made on the suggestion of ministers, and to answer the purposes of the ambition or pride of statesmen, but as a war of their own, and in defence of that very property which they expend for its support; a war for that order of things, from which everything valuable that they possess is derived, and in which order alone it can possibly be maintained.¹⁵³

Moreover, even if the people had wanted peace, that was still not a sufficient reason for seeking it. He told Windham that, when the Norwich Petition was brought up to the House of Commons in February 1795, asking for steps to be taken to achieve a

¹⁵¹ Fourth ‘Letter on a Regicide Peace’, pp.96-9.

¹⁵² Fourth, Third and First ‘Letters on a Regicide Peace’, pp. 64; 357; 196.

¹⁵³ First and Third ‘Letters on a Regicide Peace’, pp.221; 330-2, 346.

swift peace, it was his opinion that the House ought to make it quite clear that no petition of that nature had any hope of success, by delivering a resolution on the necessity of pursuing the war with determination and vigour until liberty and stability were secured once more to Europe by the destruction of the Jacobin régime in France. To yield to the people on this point would have been to revert to the very democracy which the British constitution was formed to avoid and which the supporters of the French Revolution seemed bent on promoting.¹⁵⁴

Burke brushed aside with contempt the various objections to the continuance of the war. Scarcity of grain and lack of resources were no reasons for peace; such notions, he wrote, were hardly worth his 'powder and shot'. Burke insisted that Britain had never been so powerful and wealthy as it now was—'full even to plethory'. The public loan of autumn 1796 of £18 million ought to have been a sufficient demonstration both of the nation's ability to defend the European balance of power and of the vitality of its 'ancient spirit'. So overwhelming was the evidence of Britain's prosperity that he could only conclude that, of those who predicted economic gloom for Britain, 'I fear too many are actuated by a more malignant and dangerous spirit. They hope, by depressing our minds with a despair of our means and resources, to drive us, trembling and unresisting, into the toils of our enemies, with whom, from the beginning of the Revolution in France, they have ever moved in strict concert and co-operation.'¹⁵⁵ Just as in the beginning of the war French force had been too much despised, so now it was too much dreaded. Britain was giving up far too easily, and making the task simple for the French revolutionaries. By displaying a willingness to negotiate whenever France should deign to do so, Britain was allowing its enemy to choose the moment of its own optimum advantage.

He accused ministry and opposition alike of being swayed by party factionalism in the urgent question of war and peace: 'I do not in the least wonder, that you were so soon, and so compleatly sick of London,' he informed Fitzwilliam in January 1797. 'The emulation between parties, which of them should bid highest for the destruction of their Country, and who should be the most forward in betraying it, is a spectacle never before presented in any publick Council.' 'This cursed Peace is at the bottom of all the mad things done by Ministry and opposition,' he had grumbled to another correspondent a few weeks earlier. 'I see nothing short of insanity. Pitt and Fox are not contending for the Government of an independent Country, but who should be the Viceroys deputy under a French Lord Paramount.' He feared that Pitt

¹⁵⁴ Burke to Windham, [circa 2 February 1795], *Burke Corr.*, viii, 134; First 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', p.260.

¹⁵⁵ 'Thoughts and Details on Scarcity' (1795), *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 142-3; Third 'Letter on a Regicide Peace', pp.346, 350-386, 371.

would rather be defeated on the Rhine or the Po 'than suffer a Badgerring every day in the House of Commons,' and might be harried into peace by the opposition.¹⁵⁶

Peace with revolutionary France would for Burke have been the worst result possible, and he urged that it ought not to be debated at all; but he was to struggle to the end of his days with what appeared to him to be a willing blindness to the unspeakable dangers that such a peace would involve. 'In every other posture of things there are at least chances,' he wrote; but a 'Jacobin peace' would lead to the irrevocable ruin of Britain.¹⁵⁷

VI

Burke, if by no means the sole advocate of a crusading, total war against Jacobin France, clearly had particularly strong and systematic views, and he was certainly the earliest to urge such a vision on the country. His perception of the French Revolution as an immensely significant ideological event was unusually profound, and this was often recognized, even if most did not feel able to endorse his opinions and conclusions entirely. Men of such diverse views as the Duke of Portland (who eventually joined the government and took a seat in the cabinet in 1794) and James Mackintosh (whose *Vindiciae Gallicae* [1791] and anonymous *Monthly Review* articles on the first *Two Letters on a Regicide Peace* [1796] had been arguments against Burke's position) wrote of their early admiration for his publications and the strength of his convictions.¹⁵⁸ 'I do not stand in need of any apology for my principles, my sentiments, or my conduct,' Burke himself wrote in the 'Letter to the Duke of Portland' which prefaced his *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority* (1793), and he continued to be completely unrepentant of his stance on the war amidst the varying hardships and difficulties that Britain faced in the 1790s.¹⁵⁹ As far as he could, he practised what he preached, showing particular concern for the *émigrés* in Britain—he found many of them accommodation, loans, commissions and employment; he extended his own friendship to some, and even seems to have settled some on his own land in Canada; he helped to establish and campaign for the Fund for the Relief of the Suffering Clergy of France; and he set up the school at Penn to house

¹⁵⁶ Burke to French Laurence, 16 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 179.

¹⁵⁷ Burke to John Wilmot, 12 February 1795, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 148; Burke to Windham, 25 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 205.

¹⁵⁸ Sir Gilbert Elliot to his wife, [spring 1792], *Burke Corr.*, vii, 121-2; the Duke of Portland to Burke, 10 October 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 447; James Mackintosh to Burke, 22 December 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 193.

¹⁵⁹ 'Observations on the Conduct of the Minority', p.405; see also 'Letter to William Elliot, Esq.', p.39.

and educate sixty boys whose parents had fled to Britain. Conor Cruise O'Brien points out that his lack of fuss when his ally, Fitzwilliam, was recalled from the viceroyalty of Ireland in March 1795 shows how important to Burke even in his personal life and attitudes was the need to subordinate all to the destruction of Jacobinism.¹⁶⁰

Burke's views on the French Revolution and war were deeply grounded in a coherent world-view which was in turn a product of his reverence for the established social order and for established religion. 'I have, for one, been born in this order of things, and would fain die in it,'¹⁶¹ he concluded in his *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority*, and his panegyrics on the property-based, hierarchical social order of Europe are among the most well-known passages of his works. 'Order', indeed, was to him an integral part of society, essential to the protection of men's rights to their lives, liberties and property, and he could not envisage society being 'ordered' in any other system. Democracy would be a grotesque hybrid of tyranny and anarchy, inevitably attended by such turmoil, violence and cruelty as the French experienced in the 1790s. Burke's undoubted personal attachment to Christianity was largely a respect for the necessity of the established Church in the upkeep of social order, softened by a clear affection for the rituals and services performed by the Church, and it is difficult to explore fully Burke's drive to see Jacobinism crushed without gaining an impression of some degree of religious awareness and even motivation beyond a political and intellectual need for transcendent moral sanctions.

The intensity of Burke's writing on the Revolution and the war was a result of the fact that his views were not merely part of his public, 'professional' persona, but a heavy and deeply felt personal burden. As he wrote to Fitzwilliam in 1792, 'To say that I was somewhat uneasy would but ill paint the State of my Mind.' Elsewhere, he wrote of 'a heavy weight upon my mind', 'a good deal of serious inquietude', his dread, dejection, terror, and 'absolute despair'.¹⁶² His last years sorely blighted by the death of his son, his failure to secure the impeachment of Warren Hastings, his large debts and his failing health, Burke often seemed to identify his own troubles with the European calamity, part and parcel of the apocalyptic evil of the times.

In 1795, he wrote to a correspondent that he himself had assumed that with his retiral from Parliament in the previous year his involvement with public issues would fade; but, as he admitted, 'I reckon wrong. I find it is not easy for a man who has

¹⁶⁰ Lucas, 'Edmund Burke and the Émigrés', pp.110-2; O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, pp.516-7.

¹⁶¹ *Writings and Speeches*, viii, 452.

¹⁶² Burke to Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 309; 'Heads for Consideration', p.402; 'Observations on the Conduct of the Minority', p.404; Burke to Grenville, 18 August 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 178; Burke to unknown, [1795], *Burke Corr.*, viii, 363.

deeply interested himself in the affairs of the world totally to extinguish all the Sentiments and all the emotions they have produced.' This suggested to him that his strong feelings were in the nature of a divine calling:

These very emotions may be Notices of our Duty. A reviving Sympathy with the State of the Country may possibly be a call to serve it. If the Creator never can be absent from the minutest as no more than from the greatest of his Works...if the whole scale of Nature is subservient to a moral End, then it is most sure that as no sparrow falls to the Ground without a purpose so no being is preserved in its vital Energies but for some purpose too.¹⁶³

In large part, probably, his prolific publication and persistent nagging of ministers were simply part of his large personality—his powers of rhetoric, his concern to be involved, his clear affection for his country and desire to serve it, his sense of his own superior abilities.¹⁶⁴ He also felt the urgency of his own advancing years and increasing physical weakness pressing him to speak out. 'I am come to a time of Life,' he wrote to Fitzwilliam in 1793, 'in which it is not permitted that we should trifle with our Existence...The moral State of Mankind fills me with dismay and horror. The Abyss of Hell itself seems to yawn before me. I must act, think, and feel according to the exigencies of this tremendous season.' Here he was primarily referring to his inability to give up his parliamentary seat yet because of the Hastings trial which did not end until June 1794. But the sense of impending doom and his consciousness of his duty to act for the good of his country and even mankind were more general than his thoughts about the trial.¹⁶⁵ Burke spoke often in fatalistic terms—'It seems decided, that some great Change is to take place in the whole of human affairs,' he wrote in 1795—and perhaps could not adequately convey this sense of doom in any other than religious terms.

Perhaps a sense of vocation was Burke's way of reconciling his own activism and fatalism, for certainly his appreciation of the enormity of the international situation gave him a keen awareness of his own impotence to affect events. He often insisted that he was 'heartily sick of Politicks',¹⁶⁶ and that his next effort to convince

¹⁶³ Burke to unknown, [1795], *Burke Corr.*, viii, 364.

¹⁶⁴ After his death in 1797, Fanny Burney wrote of him, 'Though free from all little vanity, high above envy, and glowing with zeal to exalt talents and merit in others he had, I believe, a consciousness of his own greatness, that shut out those occasional and useful self-doubts which keep our judgement in order, by calling our motives and passions to account' (quoted in Isaac Kramnick, ed., *Edmund Burke* [Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1974], p.95). See also *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 2.

¹⁶⁵ Burke to Fitzwilliam, 29 November 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 496. Gerald Chapman wrote of Burke being able to hear 'the adumbral tattoo of Napoleonic drums' (Chapman, *The Practical Imagination of Edmund Burke*, p.227).

¹⁶⁶ Burke to Loughborough, 12 January 1794, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 518.

ministers, or the public in general, would be his last, and he complained increasingly about the onset of old age.¹⁶⁷ 'I am past and gone by; and not being able to play the game, sit cross-legged for the support of those who are,' he wrote in 1793. 'Nature has put me aside.' If even Windham, young and liberally endowed with virtues and talents, could do nothing to convince the public of the full horror of the evil of Jacobinism, he expostulated to his friend, 'what can be done, by the expiring snuff of my farthing Candle?'¹⁶⁸ He was also sharply aware of the limitations of his position as a backbench MP and later as a retired man, firmly entrenched in the home front. He often felt as though he was in combat single-handed, and told French Laurence, 'I am afraid I have been guilty of a great folly, in extreme age, infirmity, and debility, in the jaws almost of death, to encounter the whole power of the world both at home and abroad.'¹⁶⁹

Nevertheless, he continued to long and to work for 'a war on my ideas and my principles.' He rejoiced whenever official policy seemed at last to be consistent with his views—to Burke, the naval battle won by Lord Howe in 1794 on the 'Glorious First of June' was a shaft of 'Joy which shoots across the gloom'.¹⁷⁰ In particular, Burke dreamed of a man of integrity, courage, determination and wisdom to lead Britain in a crusade against the French Revolution. 'How often has public calamity been arrested on the very brink of ruin by the seasonable energy of a single man!' he exclaimed again and again. 'But when and where and how is this man to appear.'¹⁷¹ Pitt was a sore disappointment to him—cautious, and bearing the ultimate responsibility without Burke's luxury of being able to look on and criticize, he was hardly the epic hero standing forth unambiguously against the principles and stratagems of Jacobinism. Burke urged such allies in active politics as Windham and Earl Fitzwilliam to take the moral leadership of the country upon themselves, and surely part of his frustration with his age, failing health and lack of real influence on political events was that he could not take on such a role himself. In 1791 he had

¹⁶⁷ See, for example, his letters to the Chevalier de la Bintinaye, March 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 243; to Richard Burke, jr., 1 September 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 358, and circa 1 November 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 440; to the King of Poland, 28 February 1792, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 78; and the conclusion to his 'Thoughts on French Affairs', p.386; *P.H.*, xxviii, 362, 1029, 9 February 1790, 17 December 1790.

¹⁶⁸ Burke to Sir Gilbert Elliot, [16 September 1793], *Corr.*, vii, 429; Burke to Windham, 1 August 1796, *Corr.*, ix, 64; see also his letter to the Chevalier and Abbé de la Bintinaye, 27 January 1792, *Corr.*, vii, 42-3.

¹⁶⁹ Burke to French Laurence, 10 October 1796, *Corr.*, ix, 94; see also *P.H.*, xxix, 417-8, 11 May 1791.

¹⁷⁰ 'Letter to a Noble Lord', p.187; Burke to Windham, 10 June 1794, *Corr.*, vii, 549.

¹⁷¹ 'Letter to William Elliot, Esq.', p.41; Burke to Fitzwilliam, 12 November 1789, *Corr.*, vi, 37.

written to the Under-Secretary of State, James Bland Burges, on the news of the recapture of the French royal family, that his own concern at the news,

must be a very barren concern. But if he [Burke] were otherwise situated, he would think himself obliged practically to interfere with discretion but firmness in a Cause which is that of all the sovereigns of Europe, our amongst the rest, as well as of all honest men who wish to preserve their country upon a solid and permanent basis.¹⁷²

Burke probably had more influence on British attitudes to the French revolutionary wars than he often admitted. He was frequently accused of indirectly causing the war,¹⁷³ and certainly in large part he set the framework and polarization of the debate in Britain by the breadth and vehemence of his arguments, becoming almost a stock-figure whose name became the subject both of eulogy and abuse. Most of the political nation was, whether conscious of it or not, responding in some degree to his views. *The Reflections* was a great bestseller¹⁷⁴ and several editions of extracts from it were published, as well as selections in periodicals and newspapers; and arguably his greatest impact was made by the many loyalist associations spread throughout the country, headed by men who were themselves sympathetic to a Burkean, crusading view of the war and who disseminated it in a crude and simplistic form to the masses of ordinary people who came under their influence.

Nevertheless, for all his insistence that the British people must be wholeheartedly behind the war effort, Burke's influence was weakest where he most wanted it to be felt. He was in close contact with ministers at the beginning of the war,¹⁷⁵ and they treated him with patience and a good deal of civility. But he could 'distinguish between complaisance and confidence', and he knew that his practical

¹⁷² Burke to Windham, 30 March 1797, *Corr.*, ix, 300-1; Burke to Fitzwilliam, 2 September 1796, *Burke Corr.*, ix, 79; Burke to Sir James Bland Burges, 26 June 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 278.

¹⁷³ See, for instance, Sir Brooke Boothby, *Observations on the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, and on Mr. Paine's Rights of Man* (London, 1792), p.80; William Fox, *The Interest of Great Britain respecting the French War* (2nd edn., London, 1793), p.6; *Considerations on the French War...by a British Merchant* (London, 1794), p.8; *The Evidence Summed Up or a Statement of the Apparent Causes and Objects of the War* (London, 1794), p.27; John Raithby, 'Peace' (London, 1795); also *Writings and Speeches*, ix, 14-15. He once confessed to feeling this responsibility himself: 'To say the Truth, I feel very awkward. I am as responsible, as a Minister, for the War, and yet in no one instance have I...been consulted or communicated with.' (Burke to Dr. Charles Burney, 14, 15 September 1793, *Burke Corr.*, vii, 423).

¹⁷⁴ Within a month of publication, 12 000 copies had been sold in Britain and editions had also been published in Paris and Dublin; the book went through five editions between its publication on 1 November 1790 and the end of December. 19 000 copies had been sold in Britain by the end of May 1791 (*Writings and Speeches*, viii, 13). The first *Two Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796) went through eleven editions between 20 October 1796 and the end of the same year (*Writings and Speeches*, ix, 22).

¹⁷⁵ *Burke Corr.*, vii, 348-9, n.; O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, pp. 490, 495-6.

influence on them was 'not very considerable'.¹⁷⁶ He had a group of followers and admirers whose projects and activities against revolutionary France were, as Colin Lucas has remarked, no more than 'private initiatives occasionally elevated by an appointment to an official post', notably Windham's job of dealing with the émigrés in Britain while he was Secretary of War (1794-6).¹⁷⁷

Sir Gilbert Elliot, one of his more pragmatic admirers, wrote in 1793 that 'Pitt says of him that he is always right, but that it is six months before other people. Possibly this is as bad for practical purposes as being six months too late.' By 1795, Pitt was more irritable—he returned to Auckland a letter of Burke's on government war strategy with the remark that it was 'like other rhapsodies from the same pen, in which there is much to admire, and nothing to agree with.'¹⁷⁸ It was not to be until the wars against Napoleon Bonaparte in the 1800s that Burke's crusading ideas would be seen by ministers as anything other than visionary 'rhapsodies'—which, ironically, was the very criticism he had levelled at the principles of the revolutionaries and radicals. For his part, Burke had declared in December 1792 that 'he was determined to wage eternal war with such abominable principles', and certainly his was a war to the death in every way against the French Revolution.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁶ Burke to Col. John St. Leger, 23 October 1793, *Corr.*, vii, 459-460.

¹⁷⁷ Lucas, 'Edmund Burke and the Émigrés', p.112. See also ch. 3.

¹⁷⁸ *Burke Corr.*, viii, 335n.

¹⁷⁹ *P.H.*, xxx, 188, 28 December 1792. *The Gentleman's Magazine* reported that in his last hours 'he had conversed some time, with his accustomed force of thought and expression, on the awful situation of his country, for the welfare of which his heart was interested to the last beat...' [lxvii (1797), 621-2].



2. Government Attitudes: The Pitt Administration and George III

The parts played by ideology and practical power politics have been differently weighed as motivating factors for the British government in the war against France. It has been argued, for instance, that the administration of William Pitt was considerably influenced by Burke's analysis of events and that, as Cyril Matheson put it, 'the struggle of the British Government with revolutionary principles became merged into the European war.' J. Holland Rose, on the other hand, claimed that 'the war between France and Great Britain was not, for us at least, mainly a war of principle. The material issues at stake always outweighed those arising from a clash of political ideals.' T.C.W. Blanning refined the problem by recognizing that, although ideological differences create hostility, they do not necessarily lead to war and that, while opposing ideologies caused misunderstandings and miscalculations on both sides, Britain and France did not go to war over them. In his view, power and security were the fundamental concerns. Jeremy Black has recently countered this by arguing that fear and distrust caused by ideological differences were as responsible for the outbreak of war as the clash over traditional interests. Furthermore, whereas Philip Schofield has contended that, for the period 1793-5, talk of a 'war of principles' was not 'mere gloss', but that after this the conflict became much more blatantly a matter of the balance of territorial and trading power, Peter Jupp has shown that Lord Grenville, the Foreign Secretary, became increasingly sympathetic to a Burkean interpretation of events and ideologically-motivated strategy from 1795 onwards.¹

All of these explanations attempt to reconcile the ideological aspect of the wars against revolutionary France with the government's role as an active player in them. Official government policy and the sympathies of individual ministers often diverged, and both official and private attitudes naturally changed over time as the nature and scale of the conflict changed and as the prospects of British success fluctuated. This chapter will consider the views of government ministers and King George III on the reasons for going to war against revolutionary France, the nature of the conflict, their objectives, the strategies to be adopted during it, the conditions necessary for concluding peace and the terms achieved by Britain in its eventual

¹ Cyril Matheson, *The Life of Henry Dundas, First Viscount Melville* (London, 1933), p.173; Holland Rose, 'The Struggle with Revolutionary France', p.256; T.C.W. Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars* (London, 1986), p.206; Jeremy Black, 'The Coming of War Between Britain and France, 1792-1793', *Francia*, 20 (1993), 100-8; idem., *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions, 1783-1793* (Cambridge, 1994), pp.460-71; Philip Schofield, 'British Politicians and French Arms: The Ideological War of 1793-1795', *History*, 77(1992), 183-201; Peter Jupp, *Lord Grenville 1759-1834* (Oxford, 1985), pp.177, 187.

settlement in 1802. In doing so, it will argue that, for the British government, ideological issues and the more pragmatic issues of strategic interests were not so easily divided as historians have sometimes assumed and that in this lies a key to understanding its attitudes to the wars against revolutionary France.

I

Strategic issues were undoubtedly crucial in propelling the two nations into armed conflict. Great Britain and France had been habitual enemies throughout most of the eighteenth century and, by the time of the outbreak of the Revolution in France, each once again had reason to harbour resentment against the other. French opportunism and *Schadenfreude* over Britain's defeat in the American War of Independence still rankled in Britain, while the British triumph in the United Provinces in 1787 was resented in France. British ministers were also concerned about the artificial harbour under construction at Cherbourg, which was much nearer to Britain than either Toulon or Brest, and about renewed French interest in India.² The French Revolution, however, held little appeal for the British government as a pretext for war. It appeared initially to ministers to be an imitation of the Glorious Revolution which as yet acted only to weaken the French state internationally. As William Grenville remarked, 'The main point appears quite secure, that they will not for many years be in a situation to molest the invaluable peace which we now enjoy.'³ As late as February 1792 the Prime Minister, William Pitt, was forecasting a long period of peace: 'unquestionably,' he told the House of Commons, 'there never was a time in the history of this country, when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace, than we may at the present moment'.⁴ It was only when vital British interests were threatened that war loomed.

Pitt's administration tended to be governed in foreign affairs by two main principles: on the one hand, an inclination towards seclusion from European affairs and, on the other, a concern to safeguard British security by seeking to maintain stability in Europe, or 'the balance of power'. The dovetailing or clash of these usually determined its participation or otherwise in European matters. Public opinion united with the government's necessary preoccupation with the effects of international events on Britain in a strong desire for British isolation, an inclination

² Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, p.49.

³ Grenville to the Marquess of Buckingham, 14 September 1789. Quoted in John Ehrman, *The Younger Pitt: The Reluctant Transition* (London, 1983), p.47. Grenville became Foreign Secretary in April 1791.

⁴ *P.H.*, xxix, 826, Pitt, 17 February 1792.

only increased by the humiliation of the Ochakov fiasco of 1791. Ministers clung to neutrality with regard to France, and were anxious to preserve normal relations with her, until it was clear that this position had become untenable. It was believed that France was its own worst enemy and that its inner convulsions would weaken it sufficiently to preclude the need for a declaration of war by Britain.

With respect to British security from direct external threat, the Low Countries were of paramount importance. The upheavals in the Austrian Netherlands and the United Provinces concerned the British government far more than did the Revolution in France. It was held to be necessary that the United Provinces should be kept susceptible to British influence, in order that they should not be dominated by France and extend the cross-Channel launching-pad for French aggression towards Britain. Likewise, Austrian sovereignty in the Belgic provinces was a standard principle of British policy because of fear of French expansion up the Channel coast and interference with substantial British trading interests. So important was this that Pitt stated in 1790 that the prevention of a union of either the Austrian or the United Provinces with France was 'worth the risk, or even the certainty of war.'⁵ That he meant what he said had been demonstrated in 1787, when Britain had acted decisively in concert with the Dutch Stadtholder to defeat the republican Dutch patriots and their ally, France. In 1788, Britain's entry to a Triple Alliance with the United Provinces and Prussia had increased its maritime security by guaranteeing to it the support of the Dutch navy and a safe entry into Europe for British goods in war-time.

These principles were therefore established before France declared war on Britain on 1 February 1793, and they can also be seen in the ministry's attitude to the war between France and Austria and Prussia in 1792. The British government remained carefully neutral for over three years after the outbreak of the Revolution, before tension began to build up dangerously between the two states in the autumn of 1792. William Grenville, as Foreign Secretary, was anxious not to see an Austrian war against France because it would mean either a weakening of Austrian garrisons in the Netherlands, or perhaps even a Dutch concert with Austria, which would probably entangle Britain in the conflict (as an ally of the United Provinces), perhaps provoking public protest at home and an increase in the activities of domestic radicalism.⁶ Neither the Declaration of Pillnitz in August 1791, proclaiming Austrian and Prussian neutrality until other powers joined them against France, nor the eventual outbreak of war, in April 1792 between Austria and France

⁵ Quoted in Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.49.

⁶ Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, p.143.

and in July between Prussia and France, encouraged Britain to prepare for war, despite its ministers' increasingly partisan sympathies. It was thought unlikely that the war would last long: Austria and Prussia would soon defeat France and restore order in Paris. According to Lord Auckland, the British ambassador at The Hague, the internal and external pressures on France were sufficient to ensure that it must 'burst like a Bomb' some day without the need for British intervention.⁷

The Prussian military failure at Valmy in September was alarming, but for the moment it was only further confirmation of the wisdom of the policy of neutrality: peace was still the safest option. The French annexation of Savoy rendered dubious earlier assurances that they were not interested in acquiring foreign territory, but it was not a direct challenge to British interests or obligations. Lord Grenville was 'thankful that we had the wit to keep ourselves out of the glorious enterprize...and that we were not tempted by the hope of sharing the spoils in the division of France, nor by the prospect of crushing all democratical principles all over the world.'⁸ Even after the defeat of the Austrians at Jemappes in November 1792, which led to the conquest of the Austrian Netherlands by France, the British ministry continued to explore every chance of peace. Auckland met secretly with General Dumouriez's agents. Charles Long was to have been sent to Paris to negotiate, but his trip was rendered unnecessary by Pitt's conference with Maret, a senior official from the French foreign ministry, which seemed promising as late as 2 December 1792.⁹

Britain entered the war in February 1793 because by then the drama and implications of the events of the French Revolution were no longer regarded as belonging safely on the other side of the Channel, as they had been in 1789. The violence within France, particularly that perpetrated upon the French royal family, had shocked and galvanized British opinion. It was, however, the external impact of the Revolution upon British strategic and commercial interests which led the Pitt administration into war with France. Following the evacuation of the Belgic provinces by Austrian troops on 14 November 1792, the French government declared the River Scheldt open to international navigation on 16 November, a step contrary to the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia and several major treaties thereafter, which had guaranteed it to the Dutch. This step was understood by Britain to reveal

⁷ BL Add. MS 34443 f.2, Auckland to Grenville, 'Most Secret and Confidential', 1 June 1792; *ibid.*, 34445 f.368, Auckland to Grenville, 'Most Secret and Confidential', 23 Nov. 1792.

⁸ Grenville to Buckingham, 7 Nov. 1792. Quoted in Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.205.

⁹ Harvey Mitchell, *The Underground War Against Revolutionary France. The Missions of William Wickham 1794-1800* (Oxford, 1965), p.28; Black, 'The Coming of War Between Britain and France', p.71.

French ambitions in the United Provinces and, especially after the declaration of the National Convention on 19 November that assistance would be forthcoming for all peoples who wished to overthrow their monarchs, it was feared that the republican government sought not only to conquer Dutch territory but also to overthrow the existing regime and install an administration consonant with revolutionary principles and answerable to that of France. Steps were taken to assure the Dutch of British assistance against invasion, should it be required. On 26 November an intercepted letter of Dumouriez's arrived in London, in which he had written: 'I count on carrying liberty to the Batavians [the Dutch] as I have done to the Belgians; also that the Revolution will take place in Holland...'; on the same date Brissot, in an outburst of flamboyant patriotism, proclaimed, 'We cannot be calm until Europe, all Europe, is in flames.'¹⁰ Pitt and Grenville believed that the French were trying to force them to choose between declaring war and abandoning their Dutch ally and their own security. Grenville wrote to Auckland that he saw 'little doubt that the whole is a concerted plan to drive us to extremities.'¹¹

If French aggression in the Low Countries was the crucial element in Britain's entry into the war, however, it would also be true to say that there were other considerations in the minds of members of the Cabinet. If war could not be averted, for instance, circumstances by early 1793 seemed to show that the time was right to embark on hostilities. The Dutch seemed to be in earnest against France; Russia, Spain and several of the smaller European states were signalling their readiness to join in if Britain did. The King was increasingly in favour of a tough line against France, as was the country at large—a very different situation from that of 1791 and the Ochakov crisis. Sir James Bland Burges concluded on 18 December 1792 that the sooner war was begun the better, because public opinion was excellent, and there was 'an earnest desire to go to war with France'.¹² There was confidence in British power and resources in comparison with those of France, particularly in British naval power and finances. France appeared to be consumed by civil war and bankruptcy. Furthermore, while this was not a primary consideration in the government's moves towards war, there was the added bonus that to do so would most probably split the Whig opposition in Parliament into those who would support the war and those who would continue to support the French.

¹⁰ Quoted in Blanning, *Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, pp.141, 137.

¹¹ Ibid., p.141. See also Schofield, 'English Conservative Thought', pp.186-7.

¹² Quoted in Holland Rose, 'The Struggle with Revolutionary France', p.220; see also third Earl of Malmesbury (ed.), *Diaries and Correspondence of James Harris, First Earl of Malmesbury* (4 vols.: London, 1844), ii, 501-2, 20 January 1793.

Other domestic considerations also played a part. At first, the government had not identified the British radical movement with the French revolutionaries. In 1792, however, as British radicalism grew in strength and as the military success of the revolutionary armies forced itself on ministers' notice, it became difficult for them to separate the conquests of French arms from the spread of French doctrines, and they grew alarmed at the prospect of a radical attempt to impose French principles of government on Britain.¹³ The growth of the popular radical societies and evidence of the correspondence of some of these with the French National Convention, and reports of increasing violence within France (particularly the arrest and deposition of Louis XVI on 10 August 1792, and the September Massacres, in which 1200 people were killed in Paris), dismayed ministers and prompted the two Royal Proclamations of May and December 1792, the first banning seditious publications and meetings, and the second calling out the militia and assembling Parliament. The building of barracks in Sheffield, Manchester, Nottingham, Birmingham, Coventry and Norwich was begun by the autumn, to accommodate troops in the event of civil unrest becoming unmanageable by ordinary restraints. A poor harvest triggered substantial domestic unrest to join the brew of French military success and British radical activity in ministers' minds—the common people in France had shown that they could be moved by political ideas as well as by hunger—but even more worrying than the actual activities of the radicals in Britain was the example they were being set by the revolutionaries in France.¹⁴ Hence the anxiety caused to ministers by the boatloads of *émigrés* who were arriving in Britain, and increasingly so after the decree of the French Executive Committee on 25 August 1792 banishing refractory priests and after the September Massacres, in which over 200 priests were assassinated. Not all of the immigrants were clerical, and the government feared that some were agents of the republic, sent to instigate insurrection in Britain.¹⁵ Its sense of foreboding was deepened by the French decrees of 19 November and 15 December promising to export the revolution by means of French arms wherever they might find support for French doctrines, and to

¹³ Schofield, 'British Politicians and French Arms', pp.187, 188, 191; idem., 'English Conservative Thought', p.189; Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolution*, pp.411, 413; idem., 'The Coming of War Between Britain and France', p.77.

¹⁴ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.194; Murley, 'Origins of the War', pp.59-60. See, for instance, Dundas to the House of Commons, 13 December 1792, *P.H.*, xxx, 47. On Dundas's frenetic efforts to cajole and coerce the Scottish population into loyalty in autumn 1792, see Murley, 'Origins of the War', p.202; Michael Fry, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992), pp.168-9.

¹⁵ R.R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country* (Lexington, 1983), pp.37-43. On the general anxiety caused by the rush of *émigrés* arriving in Britain, see Richard A. Soloway, 'Reform or Ruin: English Moral Thought During the First French Republic', *Review of Politics*, xxv (January 1963), 118.

requisition occupied countries in order to sustain revolutionary France in its military and proselytising activities. Revolutionary foreign policy was unconventional and apparently without scruple or caution in the magnitude of its vision to impose republican government, it was feared, throughout Europe. The triumph of the French Republic in the Netherlands, its clear intention in the United Provinces, and the admiration, hope and communication with Paris it inspired in British and Irish radicals deeply alarmed the Pitt administration concerning French plans regarding Britain itself.

Both domestic sedition and the French military threat, therefore, must be opposed; this would be a war on two fronts. According to Charles Long of the Treasury, 'The present war...derives its origin and its justification from the decrees of French democracy.' He went on to acknowledge the significance of French aggression in Europe, but he claimed that the offensive acts in question were not necessary causes of war, and that the ideological element was of substantial importance. 'It may safely be asserted, that the justification of the present war with France is not merely deduced from considerations of policy, but rests upon foundations as broad and as solid, as the existence and preservation of civil society itself.'¹⁶ Long was writing in 1796, after three years of war rhetoric and conditioning, and his interpretation of the origins of the war has been questioned by historians.

To T.C.W. Blanning the most significant contribution of the opposing ideologies of revolutionary France and Great Britain to the outbreak of war was its creation of fundamentally different criteria for the assessment of their mutual assets and weaknesses and, therefore, the birth of misunderstandings on both sides of the chances of success in any potential conflict. 'This kind of mutual miscalculation is notoriously common during periods of ideological turmoil, for a conservative's idea of strength is a radical's idea of weakness, and vice versa. It is also common when reliable information is hard to obtain.'¹⁷ Norman Richards agreed with this analysis of the British government's motivation: questions of principle, he maintained, were only of secondary importance to British ministers, and in this they differed markedly from the Portland Whigs, who did not join the government until 1794 and who were inspired by Burke's opinions on the need for an ideological crusade against France.¹⁸ Pitt and his colleagues before that time did not pay much attention to

¹⁶ Charles Long, *A View of the Relative State of Great Britain and France, at the Commencement of the Year 1796* (London, 1796), pp.7, 12-13, 15.

¹⁷ Blanning, *The Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, pp.163, 206, 208-9.

¹⁸ Norman Frank Richards, 'British Policy and the Problem of Monarchy in France, 1789-1802', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1954), p.66.

Burke's efforts: it was well over a year after the publication of the *Reflections* before they began to share his fears concerning the spread and threat of revolutionary ideas; they dismissed his attempts at diplomacy through his son in Coblenz in August 1791; and they recognized that external military force alone would prove unable to crush French revolutionary democracy.

J.T. Murley points out, however, that 'it remains a fact that there was a fundamental conflict of principle in the respective positions taken by the two countries,' and that French foreign policy was conducted in terms of a new ideology, however inconsistently, while British policy continued to represent old values and traditions. This affected not only the calculation of mutual resources for war, but also the issues over which armed conflict was begun and the manner in which the war was conducted. The opening of the Scheldt was of little real advantage to France: it was an act of propaganda symbolic of the Convention's belief in the application of the doctrine of natural rights to international affairs. It might in fact have benefited Britain, allowing its traders to use both Antwerp and Amsterdam; but treaty obligations and the maintenance of international law were more important in the British view of foreign relations and, as a symbol of revolutionary abrogation of established rights, it could not be permitted to stand.¹⁹

Murley's argument perhaps does not allow enough importance to the British fear of a French conquest of Holland and the implications of that for British security. It does, however, highlight the infusion of political and philosophical thinking into policy-making, supporting the view that it is impossible, in the last analysis, to separate the two. As Philip Schofield writes, 'French aggression in opening the Scheldt and threatening the United Provinces were grounds of war in themselves, but these were viewed in the context of the proselytizing ideology of the Revolution.'²⁰ Not only so, but they were viewed in that context by British minds steeped in the Whig ideology of the British constitution and balance-of-power notions of European relations. Grenville wrote to Auckland on 4 February 1793: 'It is to these views [of aggression and aggrandizement] rendered infinitely more dangerous by the principles of Anarchy with which they are connected, both in their means, and in their ultimate object, that His Majesty is to oppose a vigorous and effectual resistance.'²¹

¹⁹ Murley, 'Origins of the War', pp.365-7; Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions*, p.465.

²⁰ Schofield, 'British Politicians and French Arms', p.201.

²¹ BL Add. MS 34447 f.430v, Grenville to Auckland, 4 February 1793.

Jeremy Black emphasizes that British fear, which 'derived from a distrust that arose from the perception of the French government as being unwilling to accept limits to its ambitions and revolutionary pretensions', was at least as important as mutual miscalculations of political strength and military resources in the Anglo-French failure to avert war by negotiating a compromise.²² British ministers feared that the French government intended to transform international relations in line with its own revolutionary principles. Foreign policy, under their system, was formed by public debate rather than in discreet Cabinet discussions; treaties were made to conform to the universal natural rights of man rather than to the rights of nations and pragmatic balance-of-power considerations; and France intended to head a new diplomatic order in Europe in which the rights of the people against their sovereigns would be safeguarded. These threats, as Black argues, were not so much 'a distraction from the vital question' of the Low Countries as 'the essential objectives of French policy'.²³

To Burke, France was dangerous because of its doctrines and doubly dangerous because these doctrines were armed. To the ministry, by contrast, France was a threat because it was aggressive, and doubly so because its aggression was inextricably linked to a revolutionary system of political thought. Ideology was secondary but necessary; the British government may not have gone to war against French ideas, but they did go to war against French idealists because of the way they carried their ideas into practice. In reply to the Marquis of Lansdown's criticism that the government was leading the country into 'a war of metaphysics', Lord Loughborough replied, 'but who were the metaphysicians? They were 120, 000 French soldiers, and their cannon and bayonets were the arguments they used.'²⁴

II

Throughout the 1790s ministers themselves debated the nature of the war. They were united, however, in beginning the conflict with what Michael Fry has described as 'a faintly irresponsible optimism',²⁵ convinced that it would be short and successful. They planned for a short war, agreeing to subsidize only the smaller powers,²⁶ and by early March 1793 Grenville was writing to Auckland: 'I look with

²² Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions*, p.461.

²³ *Ibid.*, pp.381, 433, 462-3.

²⁴ *P.H.*, xxx, 332, Loughborough, 1 February 1793.

²⁵ Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.188.

²⁶ John M. Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder: British Foreign Aid in the Wars with France 1793-1815* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969), p.27.

great confidence now to the final result of this crisis, tho' I am sensible that its danger is not yet completely passed.' On the previous day Sir Gilbert Elliot had written complacently to his wife: 'There is an immense power confederating against France, and allowing for the uncertainty of war and of all human calculations, there seems reason to expect a successful issue to this most important struggle between all the order and all the anarchy of the world.' 'It is impossible for events to succeed one another more prosperously,' wrote the King to Dundas a month later.²⁷ There was a sense that the British cause was right and just and destined to triumph.

This optimism continued, to a greater or lesser degree, throughout 1793. Grenville acknowledged that the first campaign had not achieved all that had been hoped of it, but he insisted that the Dutch should recognize the substantial gains that had been made in the defence of their country. Pitt admitted that the failure at Dunkirk was 'a severe Check', but was disposed to see it in the light of a spur to British exertions. On 6 March 1794 he told the House of Commons: 'There is no doubt that in the course of a campaign, the prospects of success will become more or less sanguine according to the complexion of events. But the true criterion of the success of the campaign, is to compare the general state of Europe with what it was at the commencement of the campaign.'²⁸ Holland had been saved; Condé, Valenciennes and Quesnoy had been seized; and, outside Europe, acquisitions had been made at the expense of France in both the East and West Indies.²⁹ Whether or not they genuinely still felt it in succeeding years, ministers naturally continued to express optimism publicly concerning the outcome of the war.³⁰

It was assumed that the French state was weak internally, especially at the outbreak of the war. Lord Auckland was one of the most staunch believers in the theory that 'the whole French machine may suddenly fall to pieces under the general pressure which bears against it',³¹ and others believed with him that despite their great programme of requisitions, the republican government could not much longer

²⁷ BL Add MS 34449 f.23, Grenville to Auckland, 8 March 1793; Countess of Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters of Sir Gilbert Elliot, First Earl of Minto, from 1751 to 1806* (3 vols.: London, 1874), ii, 121; A. Aspinall (ed.), *The Later Correspondence of George III* (5 vols.: Cambridge, 1962-8) [hereafter *LCGIII*], ii, 26, George III to Dundas, 7 April 1793. See also Schofield, 'English Conservative Thought', p.202.

²⁸ Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J.B. Fortesque, Esq., Preserved at Dropmore* (10 vols.: London, 1892-1927) [hereafter *Dropmore*], ii, 464, Grenville to Auckland, 11 Nov. 1793; BL Add. MS 42772 f.58v, Pitt to George Rose, 13 September 1793; *P.H.*, xxx, 1485, Pitt, 6 March 1794.

²⁹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 258-260, Pitt, 10 April 1794.

³⁰ See, for instance, *P.H.*, xxxi, 1442-3, Grenville to the House of Lords, 30 March 1795; *P.H.*, xxxii, 142, the King's Speech, 21 October 1795; Lord Auckland, *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War in the Fourth Week of October 1795* (London, 1795), pp.9-12, 66-7.

³¹ *Dropmore*, ii, 419, Auckland to Grenville, 1 September 1793.

bear the expense nor the public unrest incurred by such a large-scale conflict. External hostilities, internal political turmoil, religious chaos, civil war, galloping inflation—in every sphere France had been ravaged by its own government. To Charles Long it presented ‘the image of a vast volcano, surrounded with heaps of lava, on whose surface, during many years, scarcely any trace of verdure will appear.’³² George III wrote to Grenville in November 1795: ‘I think no problem in Euclid more true than that if the French are well pressed in the next year, their want of resources and other internal evils must make the present shocking chaos crumble to pieces.’³³

The only style of warfare of which the ministers had any experience was that of the limited conflicts of the eighteenth century, and it is not surprising that they expected the present conflict to be merely another in the series. In this style of conflict, war was an instrument of diplomacy rather than a substitute for it, and it was fought for recognizable and attainable objectives. This was the warfare of Prussia and Austria, made of compromises, bargains and limited territorial aims; and, to a substantial extent, it was the warfare of Britain, based on limited military commitment to continental warfare, subsidies to foreign allies, maritime and colonial hostilities, and Britain’s own small and amateurish army which depended on individual efforts and whose structure was highly resistant to change. It was a system which knew wars of interests, not ideological crusades. Some ministers, such as Henry Dundas, rarely saw the wars against revolutionary France in any other but a traditional light. He wrote of France in 1799, ‘I am sure that country will always be the natural enemy of this, and if it is in our power we ought to use our best exertions to annihilate their naval power...we are a small spot in the ocean without territorial consequence, and our own power and dignity as well as the safety of Europe rests on our being the paramount commercial and naval power of the world.’³⁴ In the following year, in the midst of his struggle to send an expedition to Egypt to defend Britain’s Indian trade against the threat posed by Napoleon, he wrote to the Lord Chancellor:

When we depart from great leading principles uniformly adhered to in the Wisdom of our Ancestors, I cannot help being jealous of what is to happen afterwards...This is to me the more distressing,

³² Long, *A View of the Relative State*, p.57. See also *P.H.*, xxxi, 987, the Earl of Mansfield to the House of Lords, 30 December 1794; *Dropmore*, iii, 80-1, memorandum by Grenville, May - June 1795; Auckland, *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War*, *passim*.

³³ *Dropmore*, iii, 149, George III to Grenville, 30 November 1795.

³⁴ Quoted in Piers Mackesy, *War Without Victory: The Downfall of Pitt 1799-1802* (Oxford, 1984), p.13.

because I protest solemnly I cannot discover the temptation we were under to depart from our Antient Practice.³⁵

The Marquess of Buckingham saw nothing new in France attempting to extend its borders and impose the power and influence of its government throughout Europe—this had ever been its aim since the late seventeenth century.³⁶

This, however, was only one side of the picture, for the opposition of the British government to French revolutionary ideology had not been left behind when battle was joined in February 1793. There was, firstly, a recognition that France was fighting in a new way. It was ‘a military democracy, actuated by the energies, the secrecy, and the decision of despotism.’³⁷ The French ‘Nation in Arms’ had employed ‘the new invention of raising an armed force by the operation of popular tyranny’, they were ‘waging war with their whole substance’, posing a universal threat, and the results were unpredictable to the British government.³⁸ Ministers also claimed that the war involved a battle for the fundamental principles of society. Pitt told the House of Commons on 12 February 1793 that the French had thrown down the challenge of principles ‘not levelled against particular nations, but against every country where there was any form of government established...calculated every where to sow the seeds of rebellion and civil contention, and to spread war from one end of Europe to the other, from one end of the globe to the other.’³⁹ The King’s Speech on 30 December 1794 informed Parliament that Britain was fighting for ‘the deliverance of Europe from the greatest danger with which it has been threatened since the establishment of civilized society.’⁴⁰ Translated into practical terms, this might mean particularly that Britain’s future economic and political development were understood to be in jeopardy;⁴¹ but it was the business of government ministers to protect these, and they were jeopardized precisely because of the sort of war that France was fighting, which in turn was caused by its revolutionary doctrines.

The French Revolution was made animate in the language of ministers: it was a ‘spirit of restlessness and intrigue,’ or ‘the Spirit of Jacobinism’,⁴² a spirit

³⁵ BL Add. MS 40102 f.72, 14 Sept. 1800.

³⁶ *Dropmore*, ii, 390, Buckingham to Grenville, 7 April 1793.

³⁷ Long, *A View of the Relative State*, p.42.

³⁸ *P.H.*, xxx, 1065, Auckland, 21 January 1794; *P.H.*, xxx, 587, the Solicitor General, 15 March 1793; Lord Castlereagh’s comment, quoted in Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London, 1979), p.22.

³⁹ *P.H.*, xxx, 347, Pitt, 12 February 1793.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 961.

⁴¹ Michael Duffy, ‘British War Policy: The Austrian Alliance, 1793-1801’, unpublished D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 1971), pp.1-2.

⁴² Dundas to Sir James Murray, 12 September 1792, quoted in Mitchell, *The Underground War*, p.26.; BL Add. MS 34453 f.97v., Auckland to Pitt, 1 December 1794.

which persisted long after the fall of Robespierre and the leaders of the Jacobin club of Paris. 'It is in power alone that moderatism differs from Jacobinism,' explained Canning, 'its virulence remains unimpaired.'⁴³ The Duke of Portland could still describe the French government in 1798 as 'that tremendous monster'; and even Dundas warned the Commons after Bonaparte's coup of 18 *Brumaire* 1799 that the Jacobinical government of France was only at an end in terms of its form—in substance and in essence it was unchanged.⁴⁴

Moreover, the war was internal as well as external, and this too cast the war in an ideological light for government ministers. The radicals continued to work and hope for political reform in Britain through 1794 and 1795, and they tapped the unease and distress in the country caused by war-weariness and poor harvests. 'In this atmosphere,' writes John Ehrman, 'a fresh wave of radical action looked to Pitt...like revolution.'⁴⁵ The naval mutinies of 1797 were believed to have been instigated by radical agents in order to weaken Britain's defences severely, and it was feared that the same activity was being industriously pursued among the soldiers.⁴⁶ Since the popular radical societies claimed to subscribe to the principles of the enemy, the government was fighting enemies within as well as enemies without. Pitt claimed that the Revolution and the war were dependent on one another. The war, therefore, was a conflict between 'the national identities of the respective combatants.'⁴⁷ Canning wrote:

But what avails to guard each outward part,
If subtlest poison, circling at thy heart,
Spite of thy courage, of thy power, and wealth,
Mine the sound fabric of thy vital health?⁴⁸

The perception of the role of the Parliamentary Opposition was blurred. As part of the propertied elite, they were only hazily connected by ministers with the dangerous forces of radicalism. Yet the connection was thought real enough to be an anxiety: on one occasion, after Fox had toasted 'the people, our sovereign' at the Whig Club, Pitt wondered whether he should try to get the House of Commons to send him to

⁴³ *P.H.*, xxxi, 1011, 30 December 1794.

⁴⁴ *LCGIII*, iii, 135, the Duke of Portland to Pitt, 5 October 1798; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1242-4, Dundas, 3 February 1800. Towards the end of 1799, in private, Dundas did suggest that the Jacobin element of French government was declining, but Grenville rounded on him immediately—see *Dropmore*, vi, 37-9, 47, Dundas to Grenville and Grenville to Dundas, 24 and 25 November 1799.

⁴⁵ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.452. On the radicals and the war, see ch. 5.

⁴⁶ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 798, 806-7, Pitt, 2 June 1797.

⁴⁷ Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, pp.143-4.

⁴⁸ George Canning, 'New Morality', in *The Poetical Works of the Right Hon. George Canning, M.P.* (Glasgow, 1825), p.23.

the Tower of London for a spell, and in the end had him struck off the Privy Council instead.⁴⁹

It was vaguely recognized that Britain itself might have to pursue a new kind of warfare. Auckland wrote to Pitt on 1 December 1794 to tell him that, 'exposed as we have been to a System of hostility equally new & dangerous, we seem hitherto to have pursued on our part only the old beaten ground of Warfare...such Measures...were not likely to prove adequate to the exigencies of the present War,' and that 'it [is] expedient & even essential, to pursue the war by unusual and extraordinary Means',⁵⁰ although he declined to dictate these to the Cabinet, who, he said, had access to greatly superior sources of information than he did.

Schofield attempts to explain the new, ideological and the old-fashioned, interest-based aspects of the British government's perception of the war by chronology, maintaining that ministers, for all practical purposes, largely abandoned their opposition to French revolutionary principles after 1795. In favour of his argument, he enlists the government's first announcement of its willingness to make peace, in October 1795, and the cowing of the radical movement in Britain especially after the Two Acts of December 1795 against Seditious Meetings and Treasonable Practices, which allowed ministers to think again of British radicals and French revolutionaries as two separate threats. The stated views of Henry Dundas, Charles Long and Lord Auckland also fit comfortably into this interpretation.⁵¹ Schofield contends that counter-revolutionary rhetoric was used in the first years of the war to justify the conflict and its conduct, and that, in turn, this rhetoric must have influenced the conduct of the war. The pursuit of peace from late 1795 onwards was also justified by ministers partly on similar ideological grounds, that is, that with the smothering of the radical movement, the war to save the British constitution had been won.⁵²

This argument is quite persuasive, but not entirely convincing. Counter-revolutionary rhetoric continued to be used in the ministerial defence of the war and their conduct of it, especially after peace was not to be had, in 1796 or 1797; nor had it been drained of effect on policy. After the failure of the Lille talks in 1797, Grenville complained that the French republican government wished 'to spread confusion over Europe, to prolong the miseries of their own country on Jacobin

⁴⁹ *Dropmore*, iv, 187, Pitt to Grenville, 5 May 1798; *LCGIII*, iii, 59, Pitt to George III, 8 May 1798.

⁵⁰ BL Add. MSS 34453 ff. 94, 94v.

⁵¹ See *P.H.*, xxxii, 603, Dundas, 9 December 1795; *Dropmore*, vi, 37-9, Dundas to Grenville, 24 Nov. 1799; Long, *A View of the Relative State* (1796); *idem.*, *The New Era of the French Revolution, or, Observations Upon the Constitution Proposed in the Convention, on the Twenty-Third of June, 1795* (London, 1795); Auckland, *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances* (1795).

⁵² Schofield, 'British Politicians and French Arms', pp.17-18, 21-2.

principles and by Jacobin means.⁵³ Moreover, Schofield's analysis does not account for Grenville's increasing keenness to help the French royalists, or indeed the lack of British aid sent to them between 1793 and 1795, when the counter-revolutionary sympathies of the government are supposed to have been at their height. Certainly, after the entrance of the Portland Whigs to the Cabinet in July 1794, the government contained a significant lobby whose crusading views were not to be rapidly eroded in the manner Schofield suggests.

What Burke and the other ideologues often failed to see was that ministers were not spectators of the drama, as they were, but principal actors in it, whose strategy was constrained by a powerful enemy and by limited resources, difficult allies, and the need to justify themselves before Parliament and the nation. The need to produce viable and successful strategies, moreover, inevitably shaped ministers' views of the very nature of the war. Opinions affect the conduct of those who hold them⁵⁴ and, while it was for philosophers, political writers and publicists to oppose the ideological basis of the French Revolution itself, it was for the government to oppose that conduct which was attacking society rather than the principles behind the conduct. Ministers were preoccupied with the balance of power in Europe, but they recognized that it was the Revolution within France which caused it to destroy that balance of power.⁵⁵ Canning told the House of Commons in 1794 that he could not 'see such nice distinctions' as that between opposing French arms and opposing French principles, since the principles propelled the arms. Even Henry Dundas, one of the ministers least inclined to crusading views, wrote of the French Revolution in 1794:

It was...a conspiracy of the most profligate and ignorant people in the nation, against all the principles of society and religion, against all property, landed or commercial; and this conspiracy, too, formed in the centre of Europe, and threatening the subversion of every neighbouring government; a conspiracy made up of men equally destitute of principles and of property; who had everything to gain and nothing to lose by a general convulsion in Europe.⁵⁶

Pitt, responding to a charge of fruitlessly pitting arms against opinions, said in 1799:

⁵³ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 982-3, Grenville, 8 November 1797.

⁵⁴ As Pitt told the House of Commons on 21 January 1794: '...one of the leading features of this government [in France] was the abolition of religion. It will scarcely be maintained that this step could tend only to affect opinions, and have no influence upon the conduct of a nation....surely no event can be looked for more desirable than a destruction of that system which at present exists, to the misery of France and the terror of Europe' (*P.H.*, xxx, 1281, 1283).

⁵⁵ H.T. Dickinson, 'The French Revolution and the Counter-Revolution in Britain', in Hans-Christoph Schröder and Hans-Dieter Metzger (eds.), *Aspekte der Französischen Revolution* (Darmstadt, 1992), p.258.

⁵⁶ *P.H.*, xxx, 1322, Canning, 31 January 1794; Dundas quoted in Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.155.

We are not in arms against the opinions of the closet... We are at war with armed opinions; we are at war with those opinions which the sword of audacious, unprincipled, and impious innovation, seeks to propagate amidst the ruins of empires, the demolition of altars, the destruction of every venerable and good and liberal institution, under whatever form of polity they have been raised.⁵⁷

The arming of French opinions was terrifying to the British government because those arms vitally affected British territorial interests, but also because it indicated an alarming development of those opinions themselves into a tyrannical and self-propagating force not content to remain within the confines of France. In December 1796, in the debate on the failure of the Paris negotiations, Pitt referred to 'the additional expedient of disseminating new, unheard of, destructive principles...from the interior of France, into all the quarters of Europe, where no rampart could be raised to oppose the dangerous, the fatal inundation.' He claimed that this 'madness and fanaticism' had not lasted long. Later in his speech, however, he complained of the unique and unacceptable mode of foreign relations now carried on by the French—that they held their republican laws and constitution to be the sole authority on what could happen to territory conquered by them, and that this could not be negotiable.⁵⁸ In the equivalent debate in the House of Lords, Lord Auckland made the same objection. He knew enough of the French constitution, he said, to know that it was 'incompatible with a state of peace'. The experiment had now been tried, and it had been proved that the French government was 'entirely for war'.⁵⁹ Both statesmen were, in effect, calling for a counter-revolution against French foreign policy, which was a major aspect of the Revolution, and the one with which the British government was principally concerned. Not all ministers held the purely ideological aspect of the conflict in equal importance. William Windham, Lord Spencer and, later, Lord Grenville were much more sympathetic to Burkean, crusading ideas in support of a strategy of attacking French revolutionary principles within France itself than were Dundas and Pitt. Pitt was more anxious to defeat French revolutionary principles at work on the balance of power in Europe and to prevent the French revolutionary government from attacking other states than to destroy that government, and this view of counter-revolution became the dominant voice of the government. He more often employed Burkean language for effect, to

⁵⁷ *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1051, Pitt, 7 June 1799.

⁵⁸ Ernest Rhys (ed.), *Orations on the War by William Pitt* (Everyman), pp.211-2, 220, 224, 30 December 1796.

⁵⁹ *P.H.*, xxxii, 1500-3, Auckland, 30 December 1796.

please those who leaned towards that interpretation of events, but he pursued a more limited war policy.⁶⁰ Dundas, though willing to accept that the revolutionary character of the French government made it particularly dangerous and inimical, was chiefly concerned to weaken Britain's old rival as much as possible by winning as many French and (once Holland had been conquered by France in 1795) Dutch colonial possessions as possible. His aim was the greatness of Britain, not the destruction of the Revolution.⁶¹

III

Differing views of the nature of the enemy and of the war among ministers naturally produced varying opinions about what British aims in the war should be. They were careful not to pledge themselves to anything too clearly defined, perhaps also because this might have committed them to war for an indefinite period of time until these objectives were achieved. Pitt told the Commons on 7 June 1799, 'With respect to that which appears so much to embarrass certain gentlemen—the deliverance of Europe—I will not say particularly what it is.'⁶² With a rampantly aggressive France menacing Europe, could British security really be assured merely by the defence of the United Provinces? Did not the spread of revolutionary principles constitute a threat even within Britain? 'Security', as the Opposition MP George Tierney pointed out in 1800, was a justifiable and perennial war aim, but what exactly did it mean in practical terms? In fact, British war aims were unclear throughout the 1790s. Parliamentarians spent much time trying to define them; in November 1797 Lord Gwydir complained that 'the powers of language have been so often employed to describe the complicated nature of this war, that words have lost their effect by repetition.'⁶³

The fundamental war aim was to repel what ministers claimed was an unprovoked attack on British interests by France. As Pitt said in April 1793, in a sense it did not matter what Britain's grounds for war against France were, 'for while they were discussing that principle, the circumstance that arose was, that France had declared war against this country.'⁶⁴ This aim was taken up with

⁶⁰ Overton Walter Place, 'Parliamentary Debate in Great Britain Regarding the War with France, 1793-1806', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Kentucky, 1975), pp.62-3, 67.

⁶¹ Matheson, *Life of Henry Dundas*, p.186.

⁶² Michael Duffy, 'British Policy in the War Against Revolutionary France', in Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France*, p.21; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1046; see also *P.H.*, xxxiv, 44-5, Canning, 11 December 1798.

⁶³ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 860, Lord Gwydir, 2 November 1797.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, xxx, 715, Pitt, 25 April 1793.

renewed urgency after the failure of the attempts to negotiate a peace in 1796 and 1797—success in the conflict was necessary for survival. The defence of Britain included the defence of British commerce. Sir Gilbert Elliot reported that Dundas saw the destruction of French naval power as ‘the principal object proposed by the war in favour of Great Britain as a compensation for our charge in it’.⁶⁵

Ministers also claimed that it was a war to preserve the British constitution. ‘The war was not made to prevent France from giving herself the constitution that she might prefer; but to prevent her from giving to Great Britain, and to her allies, all the wretchedness and horrors of a wild democracy.’⁶⁶ Invasion was a very real fear, heightened by anxiety concerning a Jacobin fifth column within Britain. In a speech to the Commons in December 1797 Spencer Perceval warned that the tendency towards popular influence in British government had gone far enough, and that the naval mutinies and General Hoche’s attempted invasion of Ireland had shown how close Britain was to disaster. The answer he proposed was firm control of domestic affairs and zealous pursuit of the war against France.⁶⁷

Repelling French aggression involved the preservation of the integrity of the Low Countries as well as that of Britain itself. Auckland wrote to Grenville from the United Provinces at the beginning of the war: ‘Men, Commanders, Ships & Money, We could not ask for more if this Country was a part of Yorkshire; but I incline to think that it should be considered as such for the present...’.⁶⁸ The British government was also anxious to restore the Belgic provinces to Austrian sovereignty, despite Austria’s manifest lack of interest in recovering them. Ministers therefore wanted a restoration of the territorial *status quo ante* and of the balance of power in Europe. This held attractions for those of different persuasions concerning the nature of the war—Grenville and others of more Burkean convictions wanted to see Jacobinism at least contained within France, Dundas and those more preoccupied with material matters also wanted to see France stripped of its revolutionary prizes, while Pitt thought that it held out the best hope of a stable peace. In Canning’s catch-all words, ‘we can be but precariously safe, so long as there is no safety for the rest of Europe.’⁶⁹ George III was particularly anxious for

⁶⁵ 8-9 September 1793, quoted in Paul Kelly, ‘Strategy and Counter-Revolution: the journal of Sir Gilbert Elliot, 1-22 September 1793’, in the *English Historical Review*, xcvi (1983), 340.

⁶⁶ *P.H.*, xxxi, 1137, Auckland, 6 January 1795.

⁶⁷ Denis Gray, *Spencer Perceval: The Evangelical Prime Minister 1762-1812* (Manchester, 1963), pp.36-7.

⁶⁸ BL Add. MS 34448 f.186, Auckland to Grenville, 15 February 1793.

⁶⁹ *P.H.*, xxxiv, 67, Canning, 11 December 1798.

the fate of his electorate of Hanover.⁷⁰ A restoration of the *status quo ante* would, moreover, defeat the ambitions of Prussia and Austria to take advantage of the conflict to seize whatever territories they could. So concerned were they, however, that the Austrian Netherlands should not remain in French hands that, in 1796, ministers compromised long-held British policy by trying to persuade Prussia to give Bavaria to Austria and receive the Belgic provinces (once they were retrieved from France) in compensation. In 1799 Grenville toyed with the idea of joining them with the United Provinces as one independent state.⁷¹

A secondary aim on which most of the Cabinet could unite was that of indemnity for itself and for its allies—as Pitt told the House of Commons in 1799, somewhat coyly, ‘Our simple object is security, just security, with a little mixture of indemnification.’⁷² To Dundas, it was a major objective. In his opinion, Britain, having been dragged into the war most unjustifiably by France, had every reason to make the most of the opportunity to defend itself by seizing what new colonies it could, not so much for the purpose of territorial aggrandizement as for that of acquiring new markets.⁷³ Acquisitions of this nature were also sought in order to strengthen Britain’s hand in future peace negotiations, both against French pretensions and against Austrian manoeuvres concerning the Low Countries; Dunkirk was specifically attacked in 1793 with Austria in mind.

Ministers further wanted to be able to treat with a stable French government for a secure peace, and Opposition politicians were repeatedly told that Britain would not agree to negotiations until there was a firmly-established administration in France to provide some guarantee that a peace settlement would be upheld. Canning said in December 1794, ‘I would have their government, whatever it may be, strong and solid at home, that it may be safe for other nations’.⁷⁴ It was hoped that this had been accomplished by the Thermidorian reaction to Robespierre’s Terror in July 1795, and in October of that year ministers began to express a willingness to treat for peace; but the triumph of the militant party in France in September 1797 and Bonaparte’s *coup d’état* in November 1799 made this desire for a stable French government an objective of continuing relevance. ‘A stable French government’ was a vague demand in which ministers of all opinions could acquiesce; when it was more closely defined, however, disagreements were exposed. Pitt said in June 1793

⁷⁰ See, for instance, *LCGIII*, ii, 327, George III to Pitt, 5 April 1795; *ibid.*, 401-2, George III to Pitt, 13 September 1795; *ibid.*, iii, 97, George III to Grenville, 24 July 1798.

⁷¹ *Dropmore*, v, 328-9, Grenville to Sir Charles Whitworth, 27 August 1799.

⁷² *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1047, Pitt, 7 June 1799.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, xxx, 1251, Dundas, 21 January 1794.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 1015, Canning, 30 December 1794.

that it could be achieved in one of three ways: if the French Revolutionary system was completely overturned from within France, if it was extinguished by external force, or if it was sufficiently weakened to render it safe to other European states.⁷⁵ Each of these solutions found advocates in the British government: most ministers would have been happy to see the first occur; Windham and Spencer pressed for the second, with the support of Grenville, Portland and George III; and Pitt leaned towards the third, while Dundas urged its adoption by the administration.⁷⁶

Changing the revolutionary system of government in France was an attractive aim for British domestic reasons, as well as for the guarantee of a lasting peace. Pitt wrote in January 1794 that the destruction of the French revolutionary government would be 'desirable in itself' as well as 'most likely to terminate the war'.⁷⁷ As the King's Speech put it that summer: 'these designs against our domestic happiness are essentially connected with the system now prevailing in France, of which the principles and spirit are irreconcilably hostile to all regular and established government'.⁷⁸ The British war was clearly carried on against the French revolutionary government rather than against the French nation. The Duke of York wrote to his troops in Holland in 1794 that he trusted that they would 'confine their sentiments of resentment and abhorrence to the National Convention alone'.⁷⁹

Yet even those who wanted to change the revolutionary system of government in France were divided as to the form of government that should replace it. The King, and those ministers more influenced by Burke's thinking were, unsurprisingly, more decidedly in favour of a monarchical restoration. William Windham, who was Secretary for War from 1794-6 with a special responsibility for Britain's dealings with the French *émigrés* and counter-revolutionaries, expressed himself vehemently on the subject on numerous occasions.⁸⁰ The Duke of Portland also confessed himself very unhappy with the Cabinet's decision in autumn 1795 to be less committed to a restoration.⁸¹ Grenville was cautious for the first few years of the war, but, by 1799, he believed that the restoration of the French monarchy was not only a feasible objective but also that which ought to be pursued by the

⁷⁵ Ibid., xxx, 1017, Pitt, 17 June 1793.

⁷⁶ Pitt wavered on this, however; on his desire in the early years of the war for a change of government in France, see Schofield, 'English Conservative Thought', p.192-5, 201.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.327.

⁷⁸ P.H., xxxi, 958-9, 11 July 1794.

⁷⁹ Quoted in Alfred H. Burne, *The Noble Duke of York. The Military Life of Frederick Duke of York and Albany* (London and New York, 1949), p.158.

⁸⁰ See, for instance, BL Add. MS 37846 f.50, Windham to Grenville, 25 September 1796; *ibid.*, 37844 f.120, Windham to Pitt, 31 January 1796.

⁸¹ *Dropmore*, iii, 135-6, the Duke of Portland to Grenville, 23 September 1795.

European coalition: 'nothing will terminate this war but such success in France as enables us to restore the monarchy'.⁸²

The British government, none the less, even when it came closest to backing a monarchical solution, never stipulated the exact form of monarchy, since it was recognized that it was necessary that whatever was eventually established should be widely supported within France.⁸³ Most ministers did not see a restored Bourbon monarchy as a *sine qua non* of peace; they vehemently repudiated suggestions from the Opposition benches that this was their goal, and they were uneasy when Lord Hood took Toulon in the name of Louis XVII in August 1793. Nevertheless, they came to believe that a monarchy was the most desirable option, since it was most likely to prove stable and popular with the French people and, in their own manifesto to the people of Toulon of 29 October 1793, they expressed a preference for a hereditary monarchy as a long-term solution, despite their unwillingness to be so specific.⁸⁴ Having laid claim to a French port, it was necessary to define British aims more clearly. It seemed that the resistance in France at that time wanted a hereditary monarchy, and this might therefore provide an effective rallying-point.⁸⁵ This did not necessarily bind the Cabinet to a restoration policy for the rest of the war. William Wickham, the British envoy in Switzerland, was instructed not to commit the government to any particular form of constitution for France in his negotiations with the constitutional royalists in 1794.⁸⁶ Another reason for avoiding clarifying this point was the ministers' desire to use all parties who would help to attack the Republic—ultra-royalist, constitutional monarchist, or revolutionary moderate—and their consequent anxiety to offend none of these unnecessarily.

Pitt himself was willing to listen to any solution which might conceivably hasten peace, and he swung between the opinions of Grenville and Dundas, with both of whom he was very close.⁸⁷ Michael Duffy has shown that there was no significant difference over policy between him and Grenville until late 1796;⁸⁸ and, even after this, Grenville and Windham were often able to persuade him to send

⁸² Ibid., v, 148, Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 16 July 1795; Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, p.223.

⁸³ See, for instance, BL Add. MS 37845 f.114, Spencer to Windham, 18 September 1793; see also Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.599-600.

⁸⁴ PRO 30/8/334 f.192v., draft of the Toulon manifesto with Pitt's annotations; see also BL Add. MS 36808 f. 55, Grenville to Lord Bute, 19 June 1795; for doubts concerning defining a preference, see BL Add MS 34451 f.62v, Auckland to Grenville, 18 May 1793; PRO 30/8/140, Grenville to Pitt, 7 October 1793.

⁸⁵ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.311.

⁸⁶ Richards, 'The Problem of the Monarchy', p.174.

⁸⁷ See *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iii, 521, 590-1, 1 and 24 September 1797.

⁸⁸ Michael Duffy, 'Pitt, Grenville and the Control of British Foreign Policy in the 1790s', in Jeremy Black (ed.), *Knights Errant and True Englishmen: British Foreign Policy, 1660-1800* (Edinburgh, 1989).

assurances of help and more substantial aid to the French counter-revolutionary forces. The views of Grenville and Windham did not always match entirely; Windham was more insistent on the priority of military and material aid to the royalists over considerations of the rest of the European theatre of war. By September 1800, Dundas was having to acknowledge at least five different classes of opinion within the Cabinet: those who maintained that only a Bourbon restoration would produce European peace and British security; those who insisted on a counter-revolution in France but would not stipulate a Bourbon restoration; those who thought that the Napoleonic government had established itself sufficiently to warrant treating with it as the *de facto* power in France; those who would negotiate with France but only in conjunction with Britain's allies; and those who believed that it was no longer possible to influence France by armed force and that Britain should make peace whenever practicable, putting its own interests first.⁸⁹

It was not, therefore, a Cabinet of pure ideologues who fought the war against France; it was an administration struggling to find the most realistic practical solution to an unprecedented problem of international dimensions. Nevertheless, its antipathy to the French revolutionary system and its desire to replace it with *some* other form of government is clear, and thus too its acknowledgement that the war had an important ideological dimension.

The British war aims were badly flawed in two further ways. First, they differed from those of the other European powers engaged in the war against France. In the early part of 1793 Austria and Prussia were much more interested in attacking France itself and attempting a strike at Paris, than was Britain;⁹⁰ but as British ministers became more persuaded of the value of helping the French counter-revolutionaries and of the urgency of self-defence, so the rulers of the German nations became disenchanted with hostility towards France and more concerned to further their own territorial interests in Poland. Prussian ministers several times contemplated alliance with France, so little committed to the defeat of Jacobinism were they. By the time of the formation of the Second Coalition, in 1798, the general aim was no more than that of re-establishing the general tranquility, and, finally, in the planning of the Dutch campaign of 1799, objectives were subordinated to strategy in an effort to achieve unity.⁹¹ The British Cabinet disapproved of the

⁸⁹ BL Add MSS 40102 ff.79-81, memorandum by Dundas, 22 September 1800. This list does not identify those who held each of these views; a rough guess might suggest that Spencer and Portland may have fallen into the first category, Grenville into the second, Dundas into the third, Pitt into the fourth, and Chatham and Camden into the last.

⁹⁰ See Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.283-4, on the conference at Antwerp on 7 April 1793.

⁹¹ Piers Mackesy, *Statesmen at War: The Strategy of Overthrow* (London, 1974), pp.30, 35, 152.

Continental Powers using the war to rearrange the map of Europe, and they deliberately ignored continental politicking over such issues as the partition of Poland. The territory they themselves wanted was elsewhere, in the East and West Indies, and in Europe they wanted the *status quo ante bellum* to be restored.⁹² Second, Britain had too many objectives not only for their own compatibility, but also for British resources to fulfil. Pitt and Grenville resented Dutch pressure to send British ships and seamen when they were sure that the Dutch could find sufficient of their own men to defend themselves.⁹³ Each time a new expedition was launched, the pinch was severely felt. George III wrote to Pitt on 14 September 1793, of the defence of Toulon: 'The misfortune of our situation is that we have too many objectives to attend to, and our force consequently must be too small at each place'.⁹⁴

IV

Inexperienced in military matters and ill-prepared for a conflict on any significant scale against France,⁹⁵ the British government tended to be reactive rather than proactive in its conduct of the conflict. Certainly, as John Ehrman points out, its commitment and realism increased rapidly from the start of the war, when a mere 1500 troops were sent to Holland and confined to a day's march from their ports, whereas a year later 40 000 British and German troops were sent under the Duke of York to take part in the allied attempt to march to Paris.⁹⁶ With limited resources, however, and no clear agreement on their objectives, it was natural that ministers should in general respond to the pressure of events rather than initiate coherent strategies, despite ambitions to and perhaps delusions of control and leadership of the allied campaign. They were never so willing (nor, perhaps, so able) as France was to pay the price of unlimited war by making an absolute effort in terms of crippling taxation and a conscripted army. They consistently looked, in the 1790s, for ways in which the French Republic could be destroyed at minimum cost to Britain. It was a war effort dominated by politicians rather than generals, and the

⁹² As Windham wrote ruefully to Grenville on 13 February 1795, complaining of Austria's preoccupation with territorial acquisition, 'Our mouths are unfortunately stopped by our own proceedings in the West and East Indies' (*Dropmore*, iii, 19).

⁹³ See, for example, BL Add. MSS 46519 ff.47-9, Pitt to Auckland, 2 March 1793; *ibid.*, 37850 ff.22-7, Grenville to Lord St. Helens, 25 September 1794.

⁹⁴ J. Holland Rose (ed.), *Pitt and Napoleon. Essays and Letters* (London, 1912), p.225.

⁹⁵ Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, pp.188-9; Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.261-3.

⁹⁶ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.329-331. C.f. Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions*, p.144.

political leadership was not single-minded nor decisive enough to come close to a 'total war' mentality. The desirability of overthrowing the French government, however, was perhaps a concept as near to one of unlimited war as British politicians of the time could come, despite their only delayed and partial emulation of French-style warfare.⁹⁷ There was, nevertheless, a constant struggle between tactics of attrition and strategies of attack, for aggression was necessary to overthrow a government, but the inclination of most ministers was towards enduring the French frenzy on the Continent until it wore itself out and, meanwhile, pursuing naval warfare.

Their assessment of the value of British military involvement on the Continent oscillated, depending on the current circumstances of the war and on their individual priorities. Lord Auckland, who favoured a war of attrition, wanted the government to withdraw from all continental exertions except helping Holland (before its conquest by France in 1795) and Sardinia.⁹⁸ After the failure of the first Coalition, in 1795, the consensus was for abandoning all Continental operations and concentrating on colonial defence and acquisition, and hoping that the Republic would collapse internally.⁹⁹ Windham disagreed, as he was always loath to let the French counter-revolutionaries down and give them cause to despair of aid from Britain.¹⁰⁰ Sir Gilbert Elliot, likewise a *protégé* of Burke's, was dismayed when Britain evacuated Corsica in 1796, and not (he protested) purely from personal motives, because he was the British Governor of the island: rather, 'I retain a great interest in the Mediterranean branch of the war which is more important than it appears ever to have been thought in London.'¹⁰¹ Grenville maintained that France could only be beaten by a combination of allied arms and internal revolt.¹⁰² Dundas, on the other hand, was convinced that British troops ought to be used only for efforts made for strictly British interests which, to him, pointed to colonial operations,¹⁰³ but, because they were more concerned to defeat Jacobinism than at heart Dundas was, most other ministers were convinced that France must eventually be defeated on the continent.

⁹⁷ Blanning, *Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, p.211.

⁹⁸ BL Add. MS 34453 f.99, Auckland to Pitt, 1 December 1794.

⁹⁹ See *LCGIII*, ii, 400-1, Cabinet Minute, 7 September 1795.

¹⁰⁰ BL Add. MS 37844 f.105v., Windham to Pitt, 16 October 1795.

¹⁰¹ Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 359, Elliot to his wife, 26 October 1796.

¹⁰² Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, p.214.

¹⁰³ Piers Mackesy, *War Without Victory: The Downfall of Pitt 1799-1802* (Oxford, 1984), pp.11-12. See also BL Add. MSS 40102 ff.59-68, Dundas's memorandum on a possible expedition to Belleisle, 22 July 1800; *Dropmore*, iv, 433-5, Dundas to Pitt, [December 1798]; BL Add. MSS 40102 ff.71-3, Dundas to the Lord Chancellor, 14 September 1800.

The most usual strategy was for Britain's small army to lead expeditions on behalf of the United Provinces (in 1793-4 and in 1799), and otherwise to engage in continental military efforts through alliance with the other Powers. In 1793 the British Cabinet had hoped for a system of stable war-alliances which would share responsibilities for operations and supplies and which would be committed to continuing the war until a general peace was agreed. As usual, Britain hired large numbers of German mercenary soldiers to increase its own forces but, even with these, its total military strength was small, and its main contribution to the continental military effort was by way of loans and subsidies to the allies. Given the lack of agreement between Britain and the other European Powers concerning war aims, these became Britain's most effective instruments of diplomacy. As Grenville put it, tersely, to Auckland in January 1794, 'The question of Berlin's cooperation all turns on money.'¹⁰⁴

Loans and subsidies, however, were rarely an unmitigated success. Britain was slow to pay instalments of its subsidies to Prussia, and Austria was slow to repay instalments of its British loans, and hard feelings were not slow to grow. John Sherwig shows that Britain did not have inexhaustible resources to be flung at its demanding allies, and that its ministers had to be shrewdly selective in applying available money.¹⁰⁵ When loans or subsidies were not an option, ministers held out the bait of prospective territorial gains for the allies' indemnification.¹⁰⁶ They tried hard to accommodate the allies, for the sake of the continuation of the coalition, and much of the diplomatic correspondence of the decade was simply engaged in the tortuous process of trying to create and hold a continental alliance together.

This was necessary partly because of a basic distrust between Britain and the other powers. This had existed before February 1793, but it developed steadily throughout the decade. Austria, Prussia and Russia were mutually suspicious of each other's intentions with regard to Poland, Hungary and Turkey, and Britain held itself in traditional aloofness from its allies' European interests.¹⁰⁷ Squabbles meant that military advantages were not pressed as they might have been, they aggravated splits within the British Cabinet itself (over the relative merits of different allies' financial demands) and ultimately they left Britain isolated on the Continent, whether formally, as in 1797, or in real terms, as in summer 1796.¹⁰⁸ In the end, the British

¹⁰⁴ BL Add. MS 34452 f.347v., Grenville to Auckland, 16 January 1794.

¹⁰⁵ Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder*, pp.78-85, 114-5.

¹⁰⁶ See BL Add. MS 36808 f.24, Grenville to Lord Bute (ambassador at Madrid), 14 April 1795.

¹⁰⁷ The King was somewhat optimistic in his opinion that Austria and Prussia would prove better allies to Britain *unallied* to each other, out of competition (*LCGIII*, ii, 226, George III to Pitt, 1 April 1794)—for his change of mind, see *Dropmore*, ii, 648-9, George III to Grenville, 1 December 1794.

¹⁰⁸ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.608-9.

ministers continued to cling to hopes of Austria, despite a poor record of reliability and ongoing frustrations, because Austria was the power which was most constant in the war against France, next to Britain, and because of the quality and size of the Austrian army.¹⁰⁹

However frustrated they themselves were with the allies, ministers developed various arguments to justify to MPs their large spending on loans and subsidies.¹¹⁰ It was traditional British policy to pay mercenaries and allies, because of Britain's relatively small population and correspondingly small army; moreover, it saved British lives.¹¹¹ When Opposition MPs complained about the Hessian troops quartered on the Isle of Wight, Pitt replied that Parliament had voted supplies to maintain these soldiers 'with [its] eyes open'.¹¹² The end for which the alliances were formed was more important than the means that were used to obtain it: as Canning declared in 1794, ministers 'might with confidence tell the nation, we require this money, not to support a precarious or ideal balance of power, but to enable us to defend your government, your property, and your lives, against an enemy who is waging a war for your utter extermination!'¹¹³ Britain's alliances might not be perfect, but they were better than none at all. Even if British hopes were not matched by dazzling military victories, simply by engaging the French armies in battle the allied armies were distracting them from untold acts of destruction. Also, the expense saved from desisting from alliances would immediately be lost on much greater home defences that would become necessary if Britain was France's only enemy.¹¹⁴ Alliances were good for trade at present, and would enable Britain to press for better peace terms in the future.¹¹⁵ For public consumption, then, ministers displayed great trust in Britain's allies, although they also blamed them for Britain's misfortunes in the war when it was convenient to do so.¹¹⁶

To Dundas, the navy afforded Britain its best security for outlasting the struggle with France and its best hope for obtaining satisfactory terms at the peace

¹⁰⁹ See Duffy, 'British War Policy', *passim*.

¹¹⁰ *Dropmore*, vi, 242-3, Grenville to Minto, 3 June 1800: 'You are too well used to the business of Parliament to be at all surprised at our extreme impatience under all my friend Thugut's delays.' Minto was the current British ambassador at Vienna, and negotiating the terms of a new loan to Austria.

¹¹¹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 451, Grenville, 30 April 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 442, Pitt, 30 April 1794.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, xxx, 1385, Pitt, 10 February 1794.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, xxx, 1320, Canning, 31 January 1794. See also *ibid.*, xxxi, 1294-9, Pitt, 5 February 1795.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 1395, Pitt, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiii, Pitt, 4 April 1797. See also *ibid.*, xxxiv, 43-62, Canning, 11 December 1798.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 240-1, Grenville, 4 April 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 471, Pitt, 1 May 1797.

¹¹⁶ See, for example, *ibid.*, xxxiii, 1341, Grenville, March 1798.

negotiations.¹¹⁷ The navy was required to defend the country from invasion and to protect and sustain Britain's overseas trade and its far-flung colonies; more aggressively, it was used to destroy French ships, to blockade French ports (suffocating trade and rendering the French navy inactive), to prevent neutral ships from supplying France with military goods or from transporting French goods elsewhere and to sustain military ventures across the world. Nelson's victory at Aboukir Bay in August 1798 was crucially important, not just for the safety of British trade with India, but also because it encouraged Russia's eventual entry into the war in the following year.¹¹⁸

The navy's role in defending British colonies and acquiring enemy possessions was perhaps the strategy most vehemently promoted by Dundas. 'It is my conviction unalterably fixed,' he wrote, 'that either with a view to peace or war...a compleat success in the West Indies is essential...No success in other quarters will palliate a neglect there...By success in the West Indies alone you can be enabled to dictate the terms of the peace.'¹¹⁹ He argued that British overseas markets were not at present booming and that Britain must acquire new markets, if possible at the expense of its traditional rival, France (or of Spain or Holland, when they were later commandeered to fight for France). The West Indian trade supplied money to finance the British war effort and to subsidize the allies; moreover, it was only sensible to operate in the West Indies when the British army had had to withdraw from Europe in 1795. Dundas's anxiety about the West Indian situation was great, for slave revolts under French revolutionary influence threatened to deprive Britain, not France, of colonies. He warned that 'the loss of Jamaica in the present moment and state of the country would be complete ruin to our credit and put you at once at the feet of the enemy.'¹²⁰ For strategic reasons, it also seemed to him important to retain possession of Gibraltar and to capture Malta, thus maintaining British strength in the Mediterranean.¹²¹ Dundas was fearful of Napoleon's intentions in Egypt towards Britain's trade with India, as was Lord

¹¹⁷ PRO WO 1/344, ff.261-2, Dundas to Sir Ralph Abercromby, 31 July 1800.

¹¹⁸ Blanning, *Origins of the French Revolutionary Wars*, p.198.

¹¹⁹ BL Add. MS 40102 f.9, Dundas to the Duke of York, 28 July 1795.

¹²⁰ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 583, Dundas, 18 May 1797; see also Michael Duffy, *Soldiers, Sugar and Seapower. The British Expedition to the West Indies and the War Against Revolutionary France* (Oxford, 1987), esp. pp.368-393; idem., 'War, revolution and the crisis of the British empire', in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp.134-5; David Geggus, 'The Anglo-French Conflict in the Caribbean in the 1790s', in Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France*, pp.38-9; Piers Mackesy, 'Strategic Problems of the British War Effort', in Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution*, p.160; Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, pp.209-11.

¹²¹ See, for instance, BL Add. MSS 40101 ff.77-8, Dundas to Grenville, 16 April 1800.

Elgin, the British ambassador in Constantinople.¹²² He saw no need, however, for the overthrow of the Paris government—his aim was the greatness of Britain and the diminution of French power, not the destruction of the Revolution.

Lord Malmesbury believed that, once Holland had been conquered by France, it was ‘an act of political duty’ for Britain to seize Dutch possessions in India and retain them until the legitimate Dutch government should be restored.¹²³ Pitt, too, was often persuaded by Dundas’s arguments; but Grenville played down the threat to the colonies and to the Indian trade, and he failed to see the value of Malta.¹²⁴ His main concern from a naval point of view was to defend the practice of regulating neutral shipping against its critics.¹²⁵ The King, too, was often doubtful of Dundas’s colonial strategies, understanding the necessity of defence and acquisition, but believing that they diverted troops from more urgent purposes.¹²⁶

For all the arguments in favour of Continental or maritime warfare, however, the issue of military interference within France itself was bound to play a substantial part in the government’s discussions on the conduct of the war as ministers came increasingly to hope for the overthrow of the French revolutionary government, from mid-1793 onwards. At first they looked for an internal counter-revolution which, by re-establishing the Bourbon monarchy in France, would eventually lead to the restoration of general peace in Europe; but it was more realistic to recognize that external force would be necessary. Interference within France was justified in Parliament by claims that it was necessary to obtain sufficient security and reparation for the war from France and that attack was the best form of defence.¹²⁷ The King was naturally a supporter of the counter-revolutionary cause. On the capture of Toulon, he wrote: ‘I trust this is the real beginning of a counter revolution in France, and I am proud that history must admit that the conduct of England has struck the first essential blow in the cause of religion, law and the rights of humanity, as well as of every civilized nation.’¹²⁸

¹²² BL Add. MSS 37274 ff.45-53, Dundas to Grenville, 13 June 1798; *LCGIII*, iii, 419-420, 425-6, Dundas to George III, 28 September and 9 October 1800; BL Add. MSS 40102 ff.89-90, Memorandum by Dundas, 3 October 1800; PRO WO 1/344 ff.117-9, Lord Elgin to Dundas, 11 November 1799.

¹²³ *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iii, 241, Malmesbury to Grenville, 3 February 1795.

¹²⁴ See, for instance, BL Add. MS 40102 f.81v., Grenville to Dundas, 23 April 1800.

¹²⁵ Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, p.158; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1444, Grenville to the House of Lords, 24 March 1795; BL Add. MSS 38734 ff.325-6, Grenville to Dundas, 29 November 1797. Grenville also published the *Letters of Sulpicius. On the Northern Confederacy* (London, 1801).

¹²⁶ *LCGIII*, ii, 493, George III to Dundas, 3 July 1796; *ibid.*, 121-2, George III to Dundas, 16 November 1793; *ibid.*, 384, George III to Dundas, 19 August 1795; *ibid.*, 553, George III to Dundas, 10 March 1797; *ibid.*, iii, 424, George III to Dundas, 5 October 1800.

¹²⁷ *P.H.*, xxx, 1016-7, Pitt, 17 June 1793; *ibid.*, xxxi, 678-80, Earl of Mansfield, 30 May 1794.

¹²⁸ *LCGIII*, ii, 94, George III to the Prince of Wales, 15 September 1793.

To Windham, 'all blows not aimed at the body of France [were] thrown away',¹²⁹ and he used every argument he could think of to induce Pitt and Grenville to honour their promises of supplies to the French royalists and to commit themselves further to them. The French royalists could not survive on mere goodwill, and yet very little would be enough to please them. If Britain meant to win the war, surely it should utilize whatever help it could find. A counter-revolution would never be effected by continental campaigns outside France alone, and Britain must set Austria a good example in its treatment of the French royalists.¹³⁰ Even if an attempt to attack France on its own ground failed, the worst that could happen to Britain was 'a necessity of making peace without accomplishing the object, that can alone make peace desirable, the overthrow of the Revolutionary Government. But is not this necessity all but incurred the moment you say, that nothing is ever to be attempted from hence in the Interior of France?'¹³¹

Dundas, however, was willing to use British forces only to establish a secure communication with the French coast, for the purpose of transporting supplies: 'operations *in the interior* must be carried on by the French themselves'. This would leave British troops available for what, to him, were more important purposes.¹³² He pronounced himself 'a sceptic on all that subject':

...we have constantly amused ourselves and trifled away the time in forming fancies about splendid expeditions to act with men [the French royalists] who did not stand in need of such aid, who, I truly believe, are infinitely better without it and who would have found no difficulty in forming as many armies as they pleased...if we had directed their hopes and expectations solely to that object.¹³³

Given the Cabinet's lack of united effort in one direction, it is not surprising that they tended to take an ambiguous attitude towards the French royalists. Most ministers saw the support of French counter-revolutionary activity as a device to weaken rather than to defeat France,¹³⁴ and they were reluctant to stir up insurrection until they could be sure of supporting it with a concerted allied push

¹²⁹ Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, pp.22-3, 37, 166; *Dropmore*, v, 271-2, Windham to Grenville, 10 August 1799.

¹³⁰ BL Add. MSS 37846 f.56, Windham to Grenville, 24 October 1797; *Dropmore*, iv, 101, Windham to Grenville, 22 February 1798; BL Add. MSS 37846 f.75v., Windham to Grenville, 2 May 1799; *ibid.*, f.170, Windham to Grenville, 1 November 1799.

¹³¹ BL Add. MS 37844 f.225, Windham to Pitt, 27 December 1799.

¹³² BL Add. MS 40102 f.5, Dundas to the Duke of York, 25 July 1795; see also *ibid.*, ff.59-68, Memorandum by Dundas, 22 July 1800.

¹³³ *Dropmore*, v, 493, Dundas to Grenville, 20 October 1799; quotation in Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.211.

¹³⁴ See, for example, PRO 30/8/102 f.119, Pitt to the Earl of Elgin, 16 November 1793.

into France. French ultra-royalists and constitutional royalists were bitterly opposed, and the British government was reluctant to support one group more than another. For this reason, ministers hesitated at first to ally with the *émigré* French princes, who, in any case, did not endear themselves to the British government by their arrogance and refusal to co-operate with the constitutionalists. Nor did ministers always altogether trust Frenchmen of any political persuasion to oppose any description of French government more than they opposed a British attack.¹³⁵ Wholehearted support was denied by the government's willingness to consider treating with any form of stable French government. Government inefficiency and uncertainty combined to frustrate counter-revolutionaries intensely, as supplies failed with monotonous regularity to arrive as promised and the synchronization of uprisings and aid was never achieved.¹³⁶ Authority was divided between British paymasters and French leaders, coordination was poor and skilled direction of campaigns consequently often failed to materialize. The British more often than not used the counter-revolutionaries in order to further their own designs, Puisaye being a notable example of this.¹³⁷ Until British devotion to the counter-revolutionary cause matched French revolutionary zeal, it was unlikely to succeed.

Nevertheless, the government's intention while it held Dunkirk, Toulon and Corsica was to restore civil government to its pre-revolutionary principles; and, while British aid was usually too little and too late, it was enough at least to help sustain the French resistance until Napoleon's consolidation of power in 1800.¹³⁸ Indeed, the resources and attention paid in increasing proportions as the war progressed to the underground war with France make it one of the major aspects of the struggle. Because Britain rarely had either a bridgehead or an army of any size in western Europe, ministers had to rely on military activity among the French population if the revolutionary government was to be overthrown. The ministry was

¹³⁵ BL Add. MS 38230 f.220, Auckland to the Earl of Liverpool, 7 July 1795.

¹³⁶ See, for example, BL Add. MSS 37846 ff.12-13, Windham to Grenville, 16 December 1795; *Dropmore*, iii, 223, William Wickham to Grenville, 19 July 1796.

¹³⁷ See Maurice Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution. Puisaye, the Princes and British Government in the 1790s* (2 vols.: Cambridge, 1983), esp. pp.97, 152-161, 325-7, 525; Michael Duffy, 'British Diplomacy in the French Wars 1789-1815', in Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution*, pp.134-6. C.f. *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1272, Canning to the House of Commons, 3 February 1800: 'If we could bring the royalists through by the same efforts by which we were working for our own advantage, surely it was highly useful, and honourable, and humane, to do so: but we were not pledged to persevere beyond what we thought prudent on our own account...'. Also BL Add. MS 34453 f.151, Auckland to Pitt, 18 January 1795.

¹³⁸ P. Kelly, 'Strategy and Counter-Revolution', pp.334-5. Fox described the government's efforts to help the French royalists as 'avail[ing] themselves of [Burke's] principles to the effect of exciting that enthusiasm in France which had made her an armed nation, but...not adopt[ing] them sufficiently to follow those means which led directly to the object they had in view' (*P.H.*, xxxiii, 589, Fox, 18 May 1797).

in contact for long periods of time with the royalist Puisaye in Brittany and the constitutionalist d'André, and Grenville's agent William Wickham, based in Geneva but with contacts all over western France, worked extremely hard for the furtherance of counter-revolution. The Duke of York fired propaganda material in hollow shells into Valenciennes in the midst of his siege of the town.¹³⁹ Pitt may or may not have allowed the bribery of French officials and speculation against the *assignat* to encourage the collapse of the Republic, but it is indisputable that increasingly large sums of money were spent by the British government to support the counter-revolution in France. Each time Britain assisted the counter-revolutionary cause in France, as Ehrman notes, the government was carried a step further towards endorsing the goal of a restored monarchy.¹⁴⁰ For the benefit of MPs, ministers portrayed the royalists as the 'multitudes of the French nation [who] wanted only protection and support, to bring them forward to crush that convention, under which [their] evils had become insupportable.'¹⁴¹ However much ministers began by using the royalists as simply another weapon in their own war against the revolutionary government of France, their assistance to the royalists looked like sympathy for their aims and propelled them further in that direction than they might otherwise have gone.

Ministers were, at the same time as they tried to formulate a successful war strategy, preoccupied with unrest at home and in Ireland—so much so at times that it hindered the effective waging of the war.¹⁴² Especially before 1796, the government seriously feared an insurrection in Britain planned by the radicals in conjunction with the French Jacobins, and these fears returned in full force with the naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in 1797, keeping the government worried for a full three months.¹⁴³ As Michael Duffy writes, 'One of the most unnerving aspects of the French Revolution for the governments of Europe was the uncertainty of its popular impact.'¹⁴⁴ Events of the war against France became inextricably entwined with domestic circumstances: John Ehrman remarks that 'the Glorious First of June

¹³⁹ Hutt, *Chouannerie and Counter-Revolution*; Mitchell, *The Underground War*; W.R. Fryer, *Republic or Restoration in France? 1794-7 The Politics of French Royalism, with particular reference to the activities of A.B.J. d'André* (Manchester, 1965); Burne, *The Noble Duke of York*, p.57.

¹⁴⁰ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.582.

¹⁴¹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 414, Dundas, 14 April 1794.

¹⁴² Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.340-2, notes that Pitt's anxieties about internal unrest in spring 1794, and the steering through Parliament of the bill to suspend habeas corpus, caused the fateful delays in sending essential instalments of the subsidy to Prussia, thus delaying the arrival of the Prussian troops till they were too late to be of any use that year.

¹⁴³ See *P.H.*, xxxi, 498-9, Pitt, 13 May 1794.

¹⁴⁴ Duffy, 'War, revolution and the crisis of the British empire', p.125.

owed much of its reception to the damper it put on a French descent: not the least of its significance was, it seemed, to seal the arrests [of radicals] of May.’¹⁴⁵

The government passed legislation to repress sedition—the Traitorous Correspondence Act (1793), the suspension of habeas corpus (1794-5, 1798-1801), the Two Acts against Treasonable Practices and Seditious Meetings (1795), and the Combination Acts (1799-1800). Close surveillance was kept over radical activities, the small secret service collecting details from magistrates, customs officials and the post office all over the country. Spies, informers and *agents provocateur* were used; radicals were tried for sedition in Scotland in 1793-4 and for treason in England in 1794. The militia was revitalized and new Volunteer Companies were established all over the country to add to the government’s strength in defending the country against external aggression and internal unrest. Volunteer Corps were sanctioned in 1794;¹⁴⁶ the Supplementary Militia Act was passed in 1796; the militia were introduced into Scotland for the first time in 1797; and the Defence of the Realm Act was passed in 1798, to collect details of all adult males and the service they could render the state, thus showing a shift in government policy, as Linda Colley notes, ‘from seeking quality support at home to seeking it in quantity.’¹⁴⁷ Recruitment for the army and navy was a constant concern for ministers, and resort had to be made to crimps, press-gangs, quota schemes and the Militia Volunteers Act of 1799, whereby militiamen might put themselves forward for foreign service, despite ordinary regulations restricting their use to their own counties.¹⁴⁸ Dundas, however, was so sanguine that he claimed privately to be hoping for an invasion attempt, in order to prove to Britain, France and the rest of the world the independence and invulnerability of Britain.¹⁴⁹

Public opinion was taken also seriously by ministers, who had been taught its power by the Ochakov crisis of 1791. The war was ‘marketed’ with diligence: victories were puffed, defeats were excused and strategy was justified.¹⁵⁰ The Loyal

¹⁴⁵ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.401.

¹⁴⁶ *P.H.*, xxxi, 89-91, 26 March 1794, ‘Plan for Providing more completely for the Security of the Country’.

¹⁴⁷ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London, 1992), pp.289-290; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1357, Dundas, 27 March 1798.

¹⁴⁸ BL Add. MSS 35671 ff.17-18, Dundas to the Earl of Hardwicke, 15 January 1799, asking for more militia officers to extend their services to Ireland, a possibility which was sanctioned before the Act was passed in the autumn of that year. The Marquess of Buckingham had been pressing for his regiment of militia to be used abroad since May 1798—see *Dropmore*, iv, 218-227, *passim*.

¹⁴⁹ *Dropmore*, iv, 48, Dundas to Grenville, 5 January 1798. See also *P.H.*, xxxv, 1089-90, Dundas, 25 March 1801.

¹⁵⁰ Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France*, p.6; Grenville wrote of his hopes of the British forces gaining ‘not just Gazette victories but solid and permanent advantage’ in Egypt (BL Add. MS 34455 f.460v., Grenville to Auckland, [late 1801]).

Associations begun in November 1792 in London were instigated and organized by John Reeves, but they were welcomed and encouraged by ministers.¹⁵¹ Days of general fasts and thanksgiving were proclaimed several times a year. Propaganda was used in an attempt to deceive the French,¹⁵² but it was mostly directed at the British public. The government sponsored a considerable number of pamphlet and tract writers, spending about £5000 in the 1790s for this purpose. Various ministers and senior government officials—Pitt, Grenville, Dundas, James Bland Burges, Canning, Hawkesbury, Loughborough, Windham, Auckland and Long—were personally involved, either in terms of patronage of writers or by their own writing for publication. The rhetoric was largely crusading in tone.¹⁵³

By his own confession, Pitt's *forte* was economic rather than military,¹⁵⁴ and his ingenuity in public finance was exerted to the full to pay for the war. In 1793 Britain spent £8.137 million on the conflict; in 1796 the figure was £28.254 million.¹⁵⁵ New indirect taxes were regularly announced; assessed taxes were raised; a 'Loyalty Loan' was raised in December 1796; a Voluntary Contribution was appealed for in 1798 (to which George III himself subscribed £20 000); a new land tax was established, also in 1798; income tax was introduced in 1799; public loans were raised to finance the allies; and the National Debt rose swiftly while the sinking fund deepened. The run on the Bank in early 1797 was the only serious public scare concerning the government's ability to pull the country through financially.¹⁵⁶

There were, however, constant complaints to that effect from those who opposed the war and from the manufacturing and merchant communities, and frequent rumblings of economic distress among the lower orders. Ministers took steps to reassure them and to refute their arguments. They interfered with grain imports, exports, and prices; they collected information on its nationwide

¹⁵¹ H.T. Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in Britain in the 1790s', in Eckhart Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture. England and Germany in the Late Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 1990), p.517; see also Michael Duffy, 'William Pitt and the Origins of the Loyalist Association Movement of 1792', *Historical Journal* (1995, forthcoming); p.99 below.

¹⁵² See BL Add. MSS 40101 ff.79-80, Grenville to Dundas, 17 April 1800, advising hints to be dropped to British newspapers of a false plan of action, that the French might be diverted from the real attack planned for Walcheren.

¹⁵³ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', pp.48-9, 69-122, 441. Linda Colley points out the lack of attempt made by the government to foster British national consciousness among the population ('Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830', *Past and Present*, 113 (1986), 105-108), but it did make strenuous efforts to vindicate its strategy of war against revolutionary France.

¹⁵⁴ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.489.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p.516.

¹⁵⁶ P.K. O'Brien, 'Public Finance in the Wars with France 1793-1815', in Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution*, pp.165-187.

production;¹⁵⁷ and they insisted on the economic buoyancy of the country despite the war.¹⁵⁸ 'Scarcity' was caused by poor harvests, they argued, not by the war, and it was a mark of Jacobinism to claim otherwise.¹⁵⁹ Any inconvenience suffered by commerce due to the war would have been caused by the Continental conflict in any case, even if Britain itself were not involved.¹⁶⁰ Windham declared that he did not believe that any MP had deprived himself of anything because of war hardship, and 'he held it as a maxim, that if the rich felt no suffering, the poor also were not likely to feel any'.¹⁶¹

With respect to the management of Parliament during the war, the Pitt administration, though frequently constrained by the need to justify every move before it, was rarely in difficulties. By and large, it had the confidence of MPs, and they were, if anything, more firmly loyal in the more difficult phases of the conflict.¹⁶² The Foxite Opposition was troubled by internal dissension over the Regency crisis of 1788-9, the French Revolution, domestic radicalism and the war, and some of its usual adherents began to drift away to support Pitt after 1791, when Burke moved to the Treasury benches. The split was gradual and reluctant, but Pitt and his colleagues did all they could to encourage it, wooing the Duke of Portland and his followers till eventually they joined the government in July 1794, leaving a remnant of only 35 to 60 MPs loyal to Fox.¹⁶³ The government could therefore usually count on a very comfortable majority.

The strain of conducting the war and of keeping pace with continental events as well as of the domestic situation told heavily on ministers, however, and while it was a great triumph for the Pittites to have gained the Portland Whigs, this brought additional stresses to Cabinet decision-making because of their firmly crusading opinions. Lady Elliot, after meeting various ministers in the winter of 1796, wrote, 'It appears that they never agree on any point. The jealousy is so great between the old and the new party that they have no communication.'¹⁶⁴ The progress of the war

¹⁵⁷ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.43-5; *LCGIII*, ii, 352, Grenville to George III, 7 June 1795.

¹⁵⁸ See [Lord Hawkesbury], *Reflections on the Present State of the Country* (London, 1796); [Charles Long], *A Temperate Discussion of the Causes Which Have Led to the Present High Price of Bread. Addressed to the Plain Sense of the People* (London, 1800).

¹⁵⁹ Auckland, *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War*, pp.55-6; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1445-7, Pitt, 13 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1458, Windham, 13 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxv, 525-7, Pitt, 11 November 1800.

¹⁶⁰ *P.H.*, xxx, 1484, Pitt, 6 March 1794.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 1031, Windham, 30 December 1794.

¹⁶² Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.441-2.

¹⁶³ See *ibid.*, pp.403-420; Dickinson, 'The French Revolution and the Counter-Revolution in Britain', p.247; ch. 4 below.

¹⁶⁴ Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 390. See also *ibid.*, 396, Elliot to his wife, 23 May 1797.

itself was rarely very encouraging: as Auckland noted morosely in June 1794, 'it is a sad part of the Consideration that ten victories decide nothing in our favour, but that one serious defeat would probably carry the French in three weeks to the Borders of Holland at least.'¹⁶⁵ They were often working in the dark, from second-hand reports of events and conditions, and communications were maddeningly slow.¹⁶⁶ The weather often frustrated carefully planned strategies—Grenville wryly called Sir Ralph Abercromby 'a second Jonas' who seemed to attract storms at sea, and who perhaps ought to be thrown overboard.¹⁶⁷ When the divisions between the allies, splits among the French royalists, a lack of proper communication and consultation between ministers and the military establishment,¹⁶⁸ and rows between the army and the navy¹⁶⁹ are also considered, it is clear that the government had no mean task to perform simply to keep the British war effort moving.

V

In February 1793 Grenville had instructed Auckland that nothing but a French disavowal of all their offensive decrees, a guarantee that France would make peace with Austria, Prussia and Sardinia on reasonable terms and the renunciation of all recent French conquests would be considered by Britain as satisfactory peace terms. Conciliatory measures concerning the *émigrés* would help the process considerably.¹⁷⁰ The ministry's belligerent stand was gradually worn down, however, by the domestic and external pressures of unremitting warfare, until peace negotiations appeared to be a more reasonable option. By late 1794, the course of the war was discouraging, public opinion was restless and Wilberforce, one of Pitt's personal friends, had decided that he must press publicly for negotiations.

Nevertheless, ministers held out until the autumn of the following year before they announced that they were ready to talk with the French government. In the debate on Wilberforce's second motion for peace, in May 1795, Pitt once more rejected it, but he hinted that a change might not be far off: 'To look for negotiation

¹⁶⁵ BL Add. MS 38229 f.244, Auckland to Liverpool, 23 June 1794.

¹⁶⁶ See Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 276-7, Elliot to Hugh Elliot, 2 October 1794; *ibid.*, 345-6, Lady Elliot to Lady Malmesbury, 8 June 1796.

¹⁶⁷ *Dropmore*, vi, 233, Grenville to Wickham, 20 May 1800.

¹⁶⁸ *Dropmore*, v, 190, Abercromby to Grenville, 24 July 1799; Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*, pp.166, 180, 184; Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, pp.13-14.

¹⁶⁹ Minto, *Life and Letters*, ii, 232-3, Elliot to his wife, 13 March 1794; BL Add. MS 38735 ff.142-3, Spencer to Dundas, 23 September 1798; *ibid.*, 41852 f.70, Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 25 October 1800.

¹⁷⁰ BL Add. MS 34447 f.432, Grenville to Auckland, 4 February 1793.

at the present moment is premature, though I look to it at no remote period.'¹⁷¹ The failure of the First Coalition and of the attack on Quiberon, together with financial strains, the increasing unpopularity of the war at home and the new, more moderate, French constitution of September, encouraged the Cabinet to offer to negotiate. Auckland's pamphlet, *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War in the Fourth Week of October 1795*, advised ministers to seek peace, if it could be had from France on honourable terms.¹⁷² Windham was appalled. 'The Moment of Peace is yet, I hope, so far distant,' he wrote to Burke on 17 January 1796, 'that chance may still do much to save us from so dreadful a catastrophe: I mean of course Peace with a Jacobin Republic.'¹⁷³

This was the crucial issue of the debate concerning peace negotiations in the 1790s. How far was it safe to treat with a revolutionary republic, which would inevitably mean granting it recognition as a valid international state? To government policy, the question of safety was less one of political philosophy and more one of territorial security, though that was not always true of individual government ministers. Ministers never stated categorically that they would not treat with a republic, but rather that they could not treat with the French Republic so long as it continued to flout international laws and treaties and therefore to be unreliable so far as the guaranteeing of peace terms was concerned.¹⁷⁴ This allowed them to set negotiations on foot whenever they themselves judged the situation to be right, both internally and externally.

George III, once reconciled to the idea of a war in November 1792, remained inflexibly opposed to negotiating for peace from the outbreak of hostilities in February 1793, both in order that the Revolution should be completely destroyed and that Britain should obtain as many colonial gains as possible. He also thought it humiliating to have Britain's overtures for peace rejected time and time again by the revolutionaries of France.¹⁷⁵ 'No disaster can make me think the treating for peace either wise or safe whilst the French principles subsist.'¹⁷⁶ Four days before giving

¹⁷¹ Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, p.91, 27 May 1795.

¹⁷² pp.41-6.

¹⁷³ BL Add. MS 37843 f.94v.

¹⁷⁴ Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, p.55, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, 94-5, 27 May 1795.

¹⁷⁵ Holland Rose, *Pitt and Napoleon*, pp.238-9, memorandum by George III, 27 January 1796; Earl Stanhope, *Life of the Right Honourable William Pitt with extracts from his MS. papers* (3 vols.: London, 1879), ii, 442, George III to Pitt, 9 April 1797; *Dropmore*, iii, 327, George III to Grenville, 4 May [1797]. See also *LCGIII*, ii, 33, George III to Grenville, 27 April 1793. On his resignation to the necessity of a war in November 1792, see Black, *British Foreign Policy in an Age of Revolutions*, pp.417, 474-5. On his general opposition to negotiating with the French Republic, see Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.604-6; James Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary by Joseph Farington, R.A.* (8 vols.: London, 1922-8), i, 225, 17 December 1797.

¹⁷⁶ Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, ii, 455, George III to Pitt, 28 June 1800.

the Address from the Throne in October 1795 which announced the government's willingness to negotiate, he made his opinion clear to the Foreign Secretary: 'Unless the French are thoroughly reduced, no solid peace can be obtained, and no attempt ought to be encouraged of opening a negotiation, which even has the effect of destroying all energy in those who ought to look forward to the continuance of war.'¹⁷⁷ The proposal in April 1797 to attempt to re-open negotiations with France was 'a measure that from the bottom of my heart I deplore'.¹⁷⁸ In July 1800, despite his hostility to the expedition to Ferrol proposed by Dundas, the King told him that, in his view, 'Anything that will keep off making peace with France till it has an established Government on which some confidence can be placed is certainly desirable'.¹⁷⁹

The ministry was always anxious that its final peace settlement with France should be a general treaty, rather than one of several separate settlements between France and all the other belligerents.¹⁸⁰ Ministers knew that the French would rejoice at the opportunity to pick one Power off after another, isolating Britain in order to range all its force against it. Both in June 1796 and in June 1800, almost certain of an Austrian withdrawal and knowing that Britain could not lure Austria into persevering in the struggle by offering to finance another year's warfare for it, they determined also to engage in peace talks.¹⁸¹ In any case, Auckland wrote, Britain was fighting to restore the peace of Europe in general, not to achieve petty and partial pacifications.¹⁸² Thus, the continental alliances involved ministers in walking a tightrope between urging the European powers to continue in the war and making sure that they were included in the peace.¹⁸³

Armistices were also avoided, being viewed by ministers as dangerous and unprecedented. It was an unfair restriction which would allow France to gain at the expense of Britain, for if Britain agreed to halt naval hostilities, France and its allies could replenish their fleets, unhindered by the blockade of their ports. It was certain to lead to disputes between the two countries as to its exact regulation.¹⁸⁴ The pressure of public opinion and the discouragement of Marengo caused the Cabinet (from which Dundas and Windham were absent) to decide to agree to an armistice in

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., ii, 414, George III to Grenville, 25 October 1795.

¹⁷⁸ Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, ii, 445, George III to Pitt, 10 April 1797.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., iii, 385, George III to Dundas, 28 July 1800.

¹⁸⁰ See, for example, Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, ii, 443-4, Pitt to George III, 9 April 1797.

¹⁸¹ PRO FO 7/59, Grenville to Minto, 27 June 1800 and 17 July 1800.

¹⁸² Auckland, *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War*, p.66.

¹⁸³ Duffy, 'British War Policy', p.277.

¹⁸⁴ PRO FO 7/59, Grenville to Minto, 30 August 1800; *LCGIII*, iii, 404, Grenville to George III, 26 August 1800.

September 1800, but Napoleon refused the British terms, and ministers were instead persuaded to pursue Dundas's project of an Egyptian expedition.

The government attempted to negotiate peace with France several times—in March 1796, October 1796 and in July 1797—but ministers, and particularly Grenville, were pessimistic about the possibility of settlement.¹⁸⁵ A proposal of negotiations from Napoleon at the end of December 1799 was rejected on the grounds that his government had not yet proved itself to be any more stable than its revolutionary predecessors. Ministers had also just ratified a new Loan convention with Austria on 10 December, and they were hopeful that, this time, Britain and Austria would work in concert to achieve better results by continuing the war together than by holding talks immediately with Napoleon.¹⁸⁶ Peace began to look more likely, however, as Napoleon consolidated his power;¹⁸⁷ and, when the chance of another coalition looked slim, after the Austrian defeat at Marengo in June 1800, and the northern powers of Russia, Denmark and Sweden joined together in early 1801 as an armed neutrality against British interference with neutral shipping, it was not surprising that the new Addington administration of March 1801 aimed for peace from the start.

Ministers spent much more time arguing that the war should be continued than justifying their decisions to seek a peace settlement. The *leitmotiv* running through all the variations on this theme was that inherent to all the French revolutionary governments was a spirit of dangerous aggression. This had been displayed in the decrees of 19 November and 15 December 1792, in the over-running of Savoy and the Austrian Netherlands, in the French declaration of war against Britain and the United Provinces on 1 February 1793, in the ravaging of the countries that they conquered, in the fact that France had not at any stage sought peace with Britain and in their refusing the overtures and terms that Britain offered for peace. They sought to subvert the British constitution and substitute French democracy for it. The failure of negotiations 'was not to be imputed to his majesty's ministers, but solely to the unjust and exorbitant views of the enemy', demonstrated by the irritating language of the French and their evasion of the liberal and just proposals of the British government.¹⁸⁸ Even when Napoleon offered to negotiate at

¹⁸⁵ Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, pp.197, 205-7.

¹⁸⁶ Duffy, 'British War Policy', pp.388-390.

¹⁸⁷ *P.H.*, xxxv, 509, Grenville, 1800; BL Add. MSS 41852 ff.60, 62-3, Grenville to Thomas Grenville, 23 and 25 September 1800.

¹⁸⁸ *P.H.*, xxxii, 1494-7, Grenville, 30 December 1796; *Declaration. His Majesty's benevolent Endeavours to restore to His People the Blessings of Secure and honorable Peace, again repeated without Success* (Westminster, 28 October 1797).

the end of 1799, ministers were suspicious of his pacific claims.¹⁸⁹ Britain's grounds for war against France, therefore, still held.

It was maintained by ministers that, despite various changes of administration and constitution, Jacobinism was still alive in the French government. As Windham explained in May 1795, after the fall of Robespierre, 'The present boasted system of moderation acquired all its praise only from being contrasted with the former infamous proceedings of the government.... Compared with other governments, the government of France was still distinguished for injustice, violence, and insult'. Malmesbury complained that negotiating with revolutionaries was entering into uncharted territory: 'I should give them more credit, if the people with whom we have to deal were like others; but they are not governed by the same rules and principles, and the causes and effects do not agree when applied to them, as they would were they like the rest of mankind.'¹⁹⁰ Ministers sometimes conceded that the French government was becoming more 'negotiable',¹⁹¹ but the Jacobin argument could be resorted to whenever they wanted to revive support for the war. Despite his private doubts, by 1800, Dundas agreed in public that Jacobinism was still alive: 'I contend, that this proclamation [the Edict of Fraternity of 19 November 1792] contains the code of the revolution, and that its spirit never has been departed from.'¹⁹² Moreover, peace was highly unlikely to produce a more moderate system of government in France. The armies would return to France only to stir up the internal hostilities and to crush what was left of moderation in the country.¹⁹³ Napoleon Bonaparte's character underlined the continued vitality of Jacobinism in France, and made negotiating risky. His previous record, ministers claimed, showed him to be destructive, unreliable, perfidious, unprincipled and insincere.¹⁹⁴

Because of the general unreliability of the revolutionary governments of France and because of the continued activity of Jacobinism in them, government ministers argued that, even were they to conclude peace with France, it would not be a real peace in the true sense of the word, for it would be impossible for Britain to

¹⁸⁹ Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, pp.134-5 (10 May 1796), 377 (27 November 1800) 77-80 (26 January 1795); *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1014, Pitt, 8 November 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1207, Grenville, 28 January 1800.

¹⁹⁰ *P.H.*, xxxii, 11-2, Windham, 27 May 1795; *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iii, 548, 10 September 1797.

¹⁹¹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 1256, Grenville, 27 January 1795; Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, p.125, 9 December 1795.

¹⁹² *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1243, Dundas, 3 February 1800; see also *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1456-7, Windham, 14 February 1800.

¹⁹³ *P.H.*, xxxii, 14, Windham, 27 May 1795; Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, pp.59-60, 30 December 1794.

¹⁹⁴ *P.H.*, xxxv, 417-8, Windham, 9 July 1800; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1215-1220, Grenville, 28 January 1800; *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iv, 52-3, 64-6, 28 March 1801 and 8 April 1802.

reduce its navy, demobilize its army, or relinquish its conquests. At best it could afford only 'a temporary and delusive repose' to Britain, 'a feverish and troubled slumber, from which we should soon be roused to fresh horrors and insults.'¹⁹⁵ Not only would a so-called peace with France expose Britain to physical attacks, but it would also clear the way for the more effective transportation of French revolutionary ideas to the British people, firstly because a negotiation would imply a formal recognition of the French system of government, and secondly because, in peace, it would be open to French agents to travel to Britain in numbers and to stir up sedition and insurrection. Even in 1801 Windham was arguing that though under Bonaparte's regime democratic principles were no longer operative within France itself, he was still eager to export them and so throw other countries into turmoil, ready to be conquered by his armies.¹⁹⁶ Negotiation would also tend to depress Britain's allies and the French counter-revolutionaries. It would inflame French pride and increase their demands, and it would eventually place the other nations of Europe at the mercy of Jacobin violence. The Solicitor General found this idea 'disgraceful in the extreme: it was telling our allies that we regarded their interests only while they were successful; but that the moment they were unfortunate, we would negotiate without them, and leave them to their fate.'¹⁹⁷

Another tactic used by ministers to persuade MPs and public opinion that the conflict should be continued and peace rejected for the time being, was to emphasize British and allied successes and to express optimism concerning Britain's ability to finance and resource the war. Auckland complained in 1797 that the war was talked of 'as if it had brought upon us a continued series of losses and defeats; and yet there never [had] been a war in which we have obtained such glory or success.' Dundas called on MPs who, though admitting triumphs to the navy, grumbled about the failures of the army, to recall that in all the conquests made for Britain by the navy, the army too had been gloriously involved; and that the ministers who had planned the operations of the army had also planned those of the navy.¹⁹⁸ In 1795 Pitt argued that the British situation had improved materially since the beginning of the war, and he ridiculed the plight of the inflated *assignat*. Hawkesbury, in a pamphlet of 1796, argued that there was cause for alarm

¹⁹⁵ *P.H.*, xxx, 1326-7, Canning, 31 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 260, Pitt, 10 April 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1014, Canning, 30 December 1794.

¹⁹⁶ Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, pp.84-5, 26 January 1795; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1030, Windham, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 107-8, Windham, 3 November 1801.

¹⁹⁷ *P.H.*, xxx, 1019, Pitt, 17 June 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1283, Pitt, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, Canning, 11 December 1798; *ibid.*, xxxv, 426, the Solicitor General, 9 July 1800.

¹⁹⁸ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 753, Auckland, 30 May 1797; *ibid.*, xxxv, 648, 1068, Dundas, 27 November 1800 and 25 March 1801.

concerning the increase in the national debt only when national resources were not also proportionately increasing; since he could demonstrate that this was not in fact the case, there was no need for anxiety. In 1800 Canning claimed that the presence of an armed neutrality against Britain was a proof of the envy that its wealth and comfort inspired in other nations, and Windham maintained that the French were 'bleeding to death', while the British wound was as yet 'skin-deep'.¹⁹⁹

When other arguments wore thin, ministers resorted to the voice of authority. It was the King's responsibility to make war and peace, according to the constitution, not Parliament's. It was inevitable that the government should know more about the details of the situation than anyone else could do, and it therefore was more likely to be correct in its judgement.²⁰⁰ The desire of the British people for peace was no necessary reason for abandoning hostilities. Ministers took it for granted that peace was preferable to war to the majority of British subjects, but they would not believe that the country would wish them to surrender its honour, good faith and character.²⁰¹

Periodically, however, ministers sought to negotiate with the French Republic, and they therefore had to justify the abandonment of their usual, rather Burkean, arguments against peace, both among themselves and to Parliament. Peace talks could be used for tactical purposes, whether or not ministers believed a peace likely to be concluded: they could stop Austria making peace on its own with France and ceding the Belgic provinces.²⁰² Ministers argued that the French people were very likely to be desperate for peace, and that they would put considerable pressure on their government to produce it. If their rulers refused it, the resulting uproar in France would seriously weaken its government.²⁰³ It could be argued, when it suited ministers, that negotiating itself was harmless, although at other times they might argue that it was an admission of weakness. Auckland stated his opinion in October 1795 that it was 'the duty of those who conduct the war, to treat for peace whenever negotiation can tend to any probable good,' a comfortably vague stipulation. He expressed himself more strongly to Pitt. 'My private opinion has ever been that it is right in War to treat at all times; & that there are few Channels thro which a prudent

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., xxxi, 1032, Windham, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxii, Pitt, 29 October 1795; [Hawkesbury], *Reflections on the Present State of the Country*, pp.7-9; *P.H.*, xxxv, 453, Canning, 18 July 1800; *ibid.*, xxxv, 677, Windham, 1 December 1800.

²⁰⁰ *P.H.*, xxxi, 682, Hawkesbury, 30 May 1794; Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, p.92, 27 May 1795; *P.H.*, xxxii, 16-7, Windham, 27 May 1795.

²⁰¹ Ibid., xxxiii, 417, Pitt, 10 April 1797; see also *ibid.*, xxxv, 940-1, Windham, 8 February 1801.

²⁰² Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, p.197; Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, p.139.

²⁰³ *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iii, 452, Malmesbury to Grenville, 6 August 1797.

Government may not sound the ground of pacification without risque of mischief & always with *possible* advantage.’²⁰⁴

Negotiation could be seen as a useful domestic policy even if it failed to produce peace with France. At the first announcement of the British government’s willingness to negotiate, in December 1795, Dundas claimed that the British people were in a safer frame of mind than previously, and that it was now worth risking a negotiation—encouraged by government actions, they had renounced their interest in French principles and were indeed wary of them. Poor harvests in 1795 and 1799 inflamed discontent with the continuation of the war, which was a more forceful motivation. As Pitt explained to the King, it was better to take steps towards peace before Parliament and the country forced his hand; if they failed, the attempt ought to convince the public that the ministry was sincere in its desire for peace whenever it could reasonably and honourably be achieved, and so elicit a wholehearted national support for the war effort.²⁰⁵ In 1797 ministers were particularly worried that Britain lacked the financial resources to continue in the conflict. As much as he disapproved of negotiating, even Grenville was persuaded of its value in April 1797 by this consideration.²⁰⁶ Certainly, by 1801, public anxiety about the war’s effects on British industry, commerce and finance impelled the Addington administration to seek peace, together with the likelihood that Britain could not form another, successful coalition with the European Powers against France. Cornwallis wrote to his brother in November 1801 from Paris, where he had been sent to negotiate the preliminaries of peace: ‘I have long considered peace to be necessary for the preservation of our Country, and I did not therefore feel myself at liberty to refuse the mission when it was pressed upon me, altho’ nothing could be more disagreeable to me.’²⁰⁷

The supporters of the Treaty of Amiens viewed it as a peace signed from necessity, and they did not necessarily approve wholeheartedly of all its provisions. Pitt had been consulted regularly and had encouraged the new ministry in constructing it. He had always been the driving force behind the government’s attempts to negotiate with France in the 1790s. Malmesbury said of him that ‘even

²⁰⁴ Auckland, *Some Remarks on the Apparent Circumstances of the War*, p.42; BL Add. MS 34454 f.37, Auckland to Pitt, 30 July 1796. See also Rhys (ed.), *Orations of Pitt*, pp.146-7, 6 October 1796.

²⁰⁵ Stanhope, *Life of Pitt*, ii, 439-440, Pitt to George III, 30 January 1796.

²⁰⁶ Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, p.120; *Dropmore*, iii, 310-1, Grenville to George III and Cabinet Minute, 9 April 1797.

²⁰⁷ National Maritime Museum, Greenwich [hereafter NMM], COR/60, Marquis Cornwallis to his brother, 10 November 1801; *P.H.*, xxxvi, 40, Hawkesbury, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 83, Addington, 3 November 1801; *Dropmore*, vi, 439-440, William Wickham to Grenville, 9 February 1801.

when he declaimed the loudest and with the greatest emphasis for a continuation of the war, his real and genuine opinion went for *peace*', because of his preoccupation with Britain's financial state.²⁰⁸ Now he viewed it as an honourable way out of a war that was exhausting Britain financially and one which would give Britain time to renew its strength and forces. Writing to Charles Long on 1 October 1801, to tell him that the Preliminaries had been signed, he commented: 'The Terms, tho not in every Point precisely all that one could wish, are certainly highly creditable, and on the whole very advantageous.'²⁰⁹

Dundas was relatively happy with it because it maintained British supremacy in India (although he was angry about the surrender of the Cape of Good Hope and the ambiguous situation in which Malta was left, because of the importance of British trade routes to India), and he appealed to MPs not to criticize the settlement too much for the sake of the morale and loyalty of the British people. He himself did not want 'at the close of [his] political life to appear in open conflict with Mr. Pitt.'²¹⁰ Spencer Perceval was shocked at the terms, but he too kept his fears silent out of loyalty to Pitt.²¹¹ Lord Auckland told MPs that the big picture was more important than the details—Britain had been forced into a just and necessary war and had come out, having lost nothing and gained several acquisitions.²¹² Lord Mulgrave admitted that the treaty was such as to be unlikely to create such regret or humiliation in France as to provoke it to an early renewal of hostilities, and he believed that the maintenance of political unity at home was more important than criticizing the terms of the treaty.²¹³ Lords St. Vincent (now First Lord of the Admiralty), Moira, Cornwallis and Nelson favoured the peace.²¹⁴ The King, like most of these, supported the government rather than the peace itself, which he called 'an *experimental Peace*', but one that was 'unavoidable'. He had been reluctant throughout the 1790s to negotiate with France, and he did so now only from a sense that it was necessary to support the new government. He was still dubious on 5 March 1802 that France would actually sign the treaty.²¹⁵

²⁰⁸ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.628; Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, p.280; *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iv, 50, 23 March 1801; *ibid.*, 53, 29 March 1801.

²⁰⁹ Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, p.208; PRO 30/8/102 f.174, Pitt to Long, 1 October 1801.

²¹⁰ *P.H.*, xxxvi, 679-686, Dundas, 5 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 775-6, Dundas, 13 May 1802; Matheson, *Life of Dundas*, p.319.

²¹¹ Gray, *Spencer Perceval*, p.47.

²¹² *Ibid.*, xxxvi, 703, Auckland, 13 May 1802. See also BL Add. MSS 45279 ff.123-4, Auckland to Sheffield, 21 October 1801, for his private doubts.

²¹³ Philip Ziegler, *Addington: A Life of Henry Addington, First Viscount Sidmouth* (London, 1965), p.123; *Dropmore*, vii, 61-2, Mulgrave to Grenville, 18 October 1801.

²¹⁴ Ziegler, *Addington*, p.126; Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, p.213.

²¹⁵ *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iv, 62-3, 26-8 November 1801; *LCGIII*, iv, 15, George III to Hobart, 5 March 1802. The treaty was signed on 27 March 1802.

Lord Grenville was adamantly opposed to the settlement. He thought the government irresponsible and foolish to throw away so many of Britain's conquests, including the Cape, Malta and Egypt, to allow the British evacuation of all ports in the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, and to make no provision for the Low Countries.²¹⁶ These concessions had been 'lavished as the price of a peace which neither these nor any concessions can render permanent', for Britain was left without means to continue the war or to secure itself in peace against the rapacious ambition of Napoleon, and thus in a more vulnerable position than when it was at war. Moreover, he could not consider the security of Europe restored until the revolutionary taint was completely washed away.²¹⁷ Windham, in the Commons, fully agreed with him. To him, the Treaty of Amiens seemed 'the death-warrant of [his] country', and he refused to call it 'an honourable peace', since it was not even a safe peace. The colonies that had been ceded should not be thought of in mere physical and economic terms, but also in terms of the esteem and prestige they brought to Britain and the extent to which Britain was disgraced by losing them; and, in economic terms, Britain could not rely on its wealth to sustain it in Europe if it was 'scattering pearls like barleycorns' on such a scale. Like Grenville, he thought that 'Nothing...can...be more idle than this hope of the extinction of Jacobinism, either as an instrument to be used by France, should her occasions require it, or as a principle ever to be eradicated out of any community in which it has once taken root.'²¹⁸ Britain had shamefully abandoned its allies, particularly the French royalists.²¹⁹

Canning disliked the peace, because Addington had made it, but he said little, out of loyalty to Pitt. Earl Spencer said that 'no single object of the war had been obtained, and that [Britain] had sacrificed all means of protection.'²²⁰ The Earl of Minto (Sir Gilbert Elliot) also agreed with Grenville, and visited him to discuss the issue of opposing the government on the treaty.²²¹ Malmesbury had said in March 1801 that the measure of making peace at all at this juncture was 'unwise and weak', because of France's disproportionately strong bargaining position and continued to oppose it.²²² Thomas Grenville also spoke out in the House of

²¹⁶ Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, pp.309-310; *P.H.*, xxxvi, 163-170, Grenville, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 688-697, Grenville, 13 May 1802.

²¹⁷ *Dropmore*, vii, 48, Grenville to Dundas, 4 October 1801; BL Add. MS 34455 f.463, Grenville to Auckland, [1801].

²¹⁸ *P.H.*, xxxvi, 13-15, Windham, 29 October 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 89, 99, 125-130, Windham, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 742, Windham, 13 May 1802.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, xxxvi, 133-8, Windham, 3 November 1801.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, xxxvi, 160, Spencer, 3 November 1801

²²¹ Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, iii, 229, Minto to his wife, 17 December 1801.

²²² *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, iv, 48, 60, 61, 11 March, 1 and 29 October 1801.

Commons against the peace, and the third Grenville brother, the Marquess of Buckingham, was of like mind. The Duke of Richmond, still piqued at having been replaced by Cornwallis as Master General of the Ordnance in 1795, opposed the treaty and said that peace had only been required because of the incompetent conduct of the war by ministers.²²³

The old Pitt administration, split in private on the strategy to be adopted during the war, had now split in public on the nature of the peace. Windham, persuaded by the Grenvilles not to mix the question of the restoration of the French monarchy with the general question of the peace treaty in the debates in the Commons, yet managed to give an excellent summary of the two main positions on the war and the peace. The one was aimed primarily against the Jacobin spirit of the French Revolution, the other against France as a territorially acquisitive power. Because of this confusion, he said, the country as a whole 'never knew sufficiently why it was at war', and therefore clamoured for peace incessantly, more than in any previous war. 'This error has pursued us into peace,' he declared. 'No person who looked at the causes of war, could have looked at the terms of peace without alarm.'²²⁴ Yet perhaps the Pittites and even Dundas had been closer to the Burkeans than Windham gave them credit for. They had recognized the menace of Jacobinism and they had tried to defeat it, not wholly, as he had wanted, but partially, in its external aspect, in its dealings with the world outside France.

²²³ Alison Gilbert Olson, *The Radical Duke: Career and Correspondence of Charles Lennox, Third Duke of Richmond* (Oxford, 1961), p.107.

²²⁴ *Dropmore*, vii, 66-7, Thomas Grenville to Grenville, [23-31 October] 1801; *P.H.*, xxxvi, 747-750, Windham, 13 May 1802.

3. Loyalists and War Crusaders

'Thus, happily, the prudence of the administration, co-operating with the energy of the community, has saved the metropolis from conflagration, and the constitution from destruction,' Sir George Dallas wrote in 1793.¹ H.T. Dickinson, Ian R. Christie and others have argued that the conservative activists won the ideological contest of the French Revolutionary period in Britain not just because of the resilience and popularity of establishment institutions, or government repression of radicals, but in large part also because of the essential attractiveness of their arguments to the general public, as opposed to the proposals of the radicals, and because of their persuasive tactics.² This chapter will consider the wartime conduct and opinions of those people in Britain who were not merely part of an acquiescent majority in the country, but who were 'energetic' in supporting Britain's war against revolutionary France.³

Philip Schofield and David Eastwood have emphasized the variety and frequent ambiguity of British conservative thought and propaganda in response to the Revolution in France and the threat of domestic radicalism.⁴ The views of Edmund Burke and of the British government have now been examined, and this chapter attempts to plot the attitudes of their supporters along the spectrum of conservative thinking about the the struggle against the French revolutionaries, and to show how far they were influenced by government policy and by Burke's opinions. Conservative writers and activists will here be considered under the two general headings of 'loyalists', those who by and large supported government policy, and 'crusaders', those who campaigned for a more hardline, Burkean strategy

¹ Sir George Dallas, *Thoughts upon our Present Situation, with Remarks upon the Policy of a War with France* (London, 1793), p.5.

² See, for example, H.T. Dickinson, *Liberty and Property* (London, 1977), pp.270-318; idem., 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism 1789-1815', in Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution*, pp.103-27; idem., 'Popular Loyalism', pp.503-33; Ian R. Christie, *Stress and Stability in Late Eighteenth-Century Britain: Reflections on the British Avoidance of Revolution* (Oxford, 1984); idem., 'Conservatism and Stability in British Society', in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp.169-87; J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832* (Cambridge, 1985).

³ The claim that there was a remarkable surge of popular loyalism in the 1790s is not nullified, *pace* Roger Wells (*Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793-1801* (Gloucester, 1988), p.6), by the economic tensions of the decade which ensured that general public opinion was unreliable as a source of government support. Loyalists were, by definition, committed activists, at least for part of this decade, if not in all cases for all of it—it is not claimed that active loyalism was constant or consistent throughout the long struggle of the 1790s.

⁴ Thomas Philip Schofield, 'Conservative Political Thought in Britain in Response to the French Revolution', *Historical Journal*, xxix (1986), 601-22; David Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State in the 1790s', in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp.146-68. See also Donald E. Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93 and British Public Opinion', *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966), 179-90.

in the war. This division is more accurately represented as a crusading subset of a loose union of conservative, loyalist forces than as two separate groups, since there was much overlap of activity and attitudes. Each of these groups is examined in turn, first in terms of their activities during the war and then with regard to their recorded and published opinions concerning it.

I

It was necessary for the governing élite, believing itself to be under threat externally from France and internally from radical activity, to be able to rely upon at least the passive support of the majority of the British people. For this, they had to enlist the active support of a significant proportion of the population, who could help them ensure a general consensus of loyalty and patriotism. The government did not resort to military conscription or excessive coercion, as the French republic did in order to enlist support; it preferred to depend upon and, to some extent, to harness voluntary efforts on its behalf, thus leaving the social and political structure of the British state unchanged. This was only possible, however, because such active loyalist efforts were willingly made available.⁵ It is difficult to tell how many of the British population were 'loyalist' in this way, as opposed to merely passively loyal, uninterested, or even hostile, but it is likely that loyalists were to be found in most sectors of society, seeking to defend whatever benefits—political, economic, religious or moral—they perceived the present social order to have conferred upon them against the common menace of Jacobinism.⁶ French principles threatened the British social and political hierarchy which, since they protected private property, loyalists believed to be advantageous to all but the very bottom ranks of society. These principles were also hostile to the Established Church and to the Christian religion itself which upheld the political and social system and consoled those who were least well-off under it, according to loyalists. Judging by events across the Channel, they were also destructive of public order and morality.

From the time of the royal proclamation against seditious literature of May 1792, loyalists began rallying to support the government.⁷ In response to the

⁵ Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State', pp.150-1, 167-8.

⁶ Emily Lorraine de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins 1798-1800: The Early Contributors to the 'Anti-Jacobin Review'* (London, 1988), p.15. See also Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, 1983), pp.78-9; Colley, 'Whose Nation?', p.114, on the social composition of Volunteer corps.

⁷ Though the basis of this movement was already established by the active Church-and-King opposition to the Dissenting campaign of 1790 for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, and this, in turn, was not a new phenomenon.

proclamation, though with no direct request from ministers, at least 386 addresses of gratitude had been sent from cities, towns and counties by September of that year.⁸ By August, with the overthrow of the French monarchy, pamphlets and newspaper articles had begun to participate in the demonstration of loyalism; the alarm of November caused by domestic rioting and French aggression in Europe multiplied these dramatically.⁹ On 20 November 1792 the loyalist Crown and Anchor Association was formed by John Reeves, soon gaining government approval and encouragement.¹⁰ It also attracted many letters of support and offers of help and emulation from around the country, and within months it had spawned hundreds of similar societies.¹¹ The loyalists had risen, almost wholly without government intervention, because of the threat to the constitution posed by British radicalism, and they were further galvanized and propelled into the public arena by the exponential increase of the domestic threat caused by French events. It was not until 1 December 1792 that a second royal proclamation called out the militia and assembled Parliament. Many further loyal addresses were then sent to the King and Parliament, often boasting thousands of signatures each.¹² Far from having planned such a 'paroxysm of loyalty', ministers were incredulous at their good fortune: Grenville called it 'little less than miraculous'.¹³

By January 1793, with the trial and execution of Louis XVI, 'domestic hysteria was shading into war fever'.¹⁴ *The Times* continually exhorted ministers to declare war against France throughout December 1792 and January 1793: 'We had better have them as an open enemy than a perfidious neighbour, which they have long been,' it advised as early as 6 December, and on 22 January it professed gladness that matters between Britain and France were 'at length drawing to a very

⁸ Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, pp.1, 14-15; the *London Gazette*, May - September 1792, *passim*.

⁹ Gayle Trusdel Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda During the French Revolution, 1789-1802', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Emory University, 1976), p.341. See also PRO HO 42/22/474-v., John Massey to F. Freeling, 22 November 1792.

¹⁰ On the vexed question of government involvement in the creation of the Loyal Association movement, see Michael Duffy, 'William Pitt and the Origins of the Loyalist Association Movement of 1792', forthcoming in *Historical Journal* (1995). Duffy uses newly available evidence to show that the government did not have prior knowledge of Reeves's plans, but that they quickly seized on it and moulded it in order to answer their own concerns and those of the many demands they had received for a similar scheme to be established.

¹¹ Dozier estimates that nearly 1500 Loyal Associations, possibly as many as 2000, may have been established within weeks of the Crown and Anchor Association's formation (*For King, Constitution and Country*, p.62). See also Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism', pp.517-8; Austin Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-3', *Historical Journal*, 4 (1961), 56-77; Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement'.

¹² Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism', pp.520-1.

¹³ Murley, 'Origins of the War', p.324; *Dropmore*, ii, Grenville to Auckland, 18 December 1792.

¹⁴ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', pp.403-4.

near crisis.' War against France added patriotism to the loyalists' character, for it obliged them to defend the King and the British constitution not only against internal sedition but also against a foreign enemy. Military defeat of the revolutionary armies would prevent the French from menacing Britain not only on their own behalf, but also from doing so in conjunction with the British radicals. The war breathed fresh vigour into the loyalist movement, by giving it a new *raison d'être*, and this was to sustain it when, by the mid-1790s, the domestic radical threat had ebbed. Loyalist addresses became pro-war effusions: the *Sun* reported on 1 March 1793 that the Corporation of Bridport had intimated that its subscription of £1200 'for the suppressing of Tumults and Insurrections' was now to be 'as loyally applied in increasing the Bounties to Seamen'.

Since the loyalists' war, like that of the government, was fought on two fronts, they continued to generate and distribute printed propaganda against radical doctrines. This propaganda was even more powerful than that written before the outbreak of the conflict, however, for it could now associate radicalism not only with the chaos inside France but also with French aggression towards Britain. It included morality tracts, pamphlets, histories of the Revolution and the war, songs, handbills, newspapers, periodicals, sermons, novels, plays, poetry and literary reviews, directed at various classes of readers and far outdoing their radical counterparts in terms of volume, sales, variety, and social and geographical spread.¹⁵ They were sold by booksellers or street-hawkers, or distributed freely or at a greatly subsidized rate by loyalist societies. Pamphlet production never repeated the peak of 1792, but the invasion crisis of 1797 produced nearly as many new pamphlets (about 370 compared with about 440) in that year.¹⁶ Many novels and pamphlets began with an apologia similar to that which prefaced George Walker's novel, *The Vagabond*, declaring their authors' didactic intentions: 'I am aware how insignificant are my attempts...but perhaps a *Novel* may gain attention, when arguments of the soundest sense and most perfect eloquence shall fail to arrest the feet of the *Trifler* from the specious paths of the new Philosophy.'¹⁷

Some loyalist writers, such as John Reeves, Herbert Marsh and Nicholas Vansittart, were paid by the Treasury, which seemed even more concerned to defend

¹⁵ Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism', p.110.

¹⁶ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.172.

¹⁷ George Walker, *The Vagabond, A Novel* (3rd edition, 2 vols.: London, 1799), i, p.vi; see also, for example, *Desultory Thoughts on the Atrocious Cruelties of the French Nation: With Observations on the Necessity of the War, and a Calm Admonitory Address to all English Jacobins* (Bath, 1794), p.iv; and William Playfair, *Thoughts on the Present State of French Politics, and the Necessity and Policy of Diminishing France, for Her Internal Peace, and to Secure the Tranquillity of Europe* (London, 1793), pp.9-10.

the ministry's war policies by this means than it had been to crush radicalism before 1793. It does not seem, however, that the government deliberately provoked war alarms in order to stir up loyalism, for the output of other conservative writers rose and fell in parallel with government writers throughout the decade. Treasury pamphlets, and even those written by commission for the loyalist associations, were only a small proportion of the whole. Writers often felt the need to protest that they were neither ministerial hirelings nor 'downright jacobins', and that their thinking was independent.¹⁸ Much propaganda was written by minor, local figures—ministers, schoolteachers, magistrates and civil servants, often involved in their local loyalist associations—as well as by prominent national names, and pamphlets and handbills might be reproduced and adapted to serve the needs of different regions of the country.¹⁹ The *Sun* newspaper was established in October 1792 and controlled by the Treasury, as was the *True Briton*; and the *Star*, *The Times*, the *World*, the *Public Ledger* and *Woodfall's Diary* were subsidized.²⁰ The *Observer* was also loyalist, as were many of the provincial newspapers, such as the *Caledonian Mercury*, the *York Courant* and the *Leicester Journal*.²¹ Just as individual pamphlets often took issue with individual radical or anti-war pamphlets, so loyalist newspapers frequently quarrelled with the reports and leader columns printed in the opposition papers and, indeed, sometimes with those in other loyalist papers. This maintained a lively polemic well after 1792, although the newspaper debate was often conducted among rivals in terms of the accuracy of reported 'facts' as well as in terms of opinions.²² Popular propaganda reasoned simply and emotively; other loyalist literature argued in greater complexity and depth.

Loyalists also tried to suggest various tactics to ministers, and for this they did not rely only upon the indirect means of their propaganda. Magistrates and many others wrote to the Home Office with their fears and recommendations, sometimes at great length, on such matters as recruitment, national defence and even

¹⁸ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', pp.399, 145-6, 357; see, for instance, *The Dutch Expedition Vindicated, with Brief Observations on the Emigrants* (London, 1799), p.16.

¹⁹ Part of [Theodore Price], *Humble Advice to Sundry Sorts of People, by Job Nott, Bucklemaker* (Birmingham, February 1793) was reprinted from [Theodore Price], *Brother Fustian's Advice to the Inhabitants of Manchester and Salford* (Manchester, December 1792).

²⁰ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', pp.50-2.

²¹ Dickinson, 'Britain and the Ideological Crusade Against the French Revolution', in L. Domergue and G. Lamoine (eds.), *Après 89 La Révolution Modèle ou Repoussoir*, (Toulouse, 1992), p.162.

²² See, for instance, *The Times* of 18 June 1794 on the surrender of Ypres; of 21, 22 and 24 April 1797 on the naval mutiny at Portsmouth; of 20 October 1797 on the failure of the peace negotiations at Lisle; and the *Sun* of 9 January 1800 on the government's rejection of Bonaparte's offer of peace negotiations.

international strategy.²³ Far from requiring the prompting and organization of government, they frequently stressed the need for the efforts of individuals in the battle against domestic radicalism and revolutionary France. 'It is almost dishonourable, at a period like the present,' declared the *Sun* on 1 March 1793, 'for any man to be out of active employment in the service of his Country.' Every individual had it in his power to do some public good, and neglect was a desertion worse than treason, according to a pamphlet of 1798. Theodore Price's popular 'Job Nott' pamphlets specifically addressed various classes within the lower orders—male and female artificers, 'old maids', 'young widows', wealthy inhabitants, house servants, travellers, manufacturers, overseers of the poor, farmers, and so on.²⁴ They believed that the British people fell into just two groups—those who fought for their country and those who fought against it.²⁵

There were various other ways in which loyalists could identify with the cause of the government. Raising and contributing to subscriptions was one of the most popular means of demonstrating practical support. Robert R. Dozier has shown that there were three main subscription drives in 1793: in February and March, for bounties to encourage naval recruitment, from March to July, for money to help war widows, orphans and dependants, and, in the winter of 1793-4, for funds to buy clothing and other items for the British army in Flanders. The 'king's bounty' to enlisting seamen was £5; in London, it was increased to £13 by the contributions of the City and various loyalist organizations.²⁶ Loyalist newspapers commended these efforts and ran their own fundraising schemes. The *Sun* claimed that its subscription in aid of war widows and orphans, opened on 28 February 1793, had by 19 March

²³ See PRO HO 42/20-50, *passim*. See also BL Add. MSS 27916, ff.32-53, 'A Letter. To the Right Hon.ble William Pitt. By a Freeman of Southampton. 1793'; PRO HO 42/24/190-227, Thomas Parker to Evan Nepean, 21 January 1793; *ibid.*, 42/24/640-1, M. Marchington to George III, 24 February 1793; *ibid.*, 42/29/474-82, William Playfair to Dundas, 24 April 1794; NMM, MEL/2, letters from William Craig Harborne, 7-9 January 1793, and 'J.S.', 16 April 1791-19 May 1793; *ibid.*, MEL/6, letter from Capt. A. Blair, 3 March 1798; *ibid.*, MEL/9, letters from Col. W. Fullarton, Sept. 1796 and 31 July 1798, and William McDowell, 1798.

²⁴ 'An Address to the Association of the Parish of St. Martin in the Fields, Formed for the Preservation of Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers' [1792], in the British Library collection of songs and broadsides at 648.c.26, f.98; *Our Good Old Castle on the Rock: Or Union the One Thing Needful. Addressed to the People of England* (3rd edition: London, 1798), p.5; [Theodore Price], *A Continuation of my Last Book, or a Back Front View of the Five Headed Monster* (Birmingham, 1798), pp.6-7; [Theodore Price], *Further Humble Advice from Job Nott* (Birmingham, 1800), pp.1-6.

²⁵ John Somerville, *A Short Address to the Yeomanry of England, and Others* (Bath, 1795), p.35; *Desultory Thoughts*, p.vii.

²⁶ Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, pp.105-111. See also PRO HO 42/24/526-v., 42/25/36, bounties offered by the inhabitants of Ashburton, 16 February 1793, and by the Totnes Loyalist Association; *ibid.*, 42/27/131-v., 145-v., 42/28/88-9, 42/32/203, subscriptions raised by John Brookfield, 13 November 1793, by Richard Baugh, 14 November 1793, by the Society at the Crown and Anchor, 19 January 1794, and by the *Oracle* newspaper.

1793 raised nearly £5000, 'exclusive of the Ladies' Subscription on the same plan'. Some pamphlets declared that the profits from their sale would be given to similar causes, thus encouraging a double loyalty in their potential purchasers.²⁷ Later, loyalists could donate to the government's Loyalty Loan of 1796 and the Voluntary Contribution of 1798.²⁸ There were also loyalist meetings, addresses, street processions, banquets, demonstrations, church services, the singing of 'God Save the King' at the end of theatre performances, and public ceremonies on days of victory celebration and at the departures of troops and sailors for the front.

Some loyalists had, even before the outbreak of hostilities, proposed a further and more radical form of endeavour: military vigilance against both internal and external enemies. In February 1793, the *London Chronicle* reported that numbers of gentlemen living on the south coast of England had formed themselves into mounted patrols to defend their property against French attack. In March 1794, ministers permitted the official formation of armed Volunteer companies, to be financed, again, by public subscription. At first, these were composed almost wholly of the comfortably-off and socially respected. In 1798, however, with heightened fears of French invasion, mass enlistment was encouraged. By 1805, the Volunteer force could boast 450 000 men, the largest organization in Britain.²⁹ There were problems, for local finance and enthusiasm were not inexhaustible, especially at times when there appeared to be no tangible threat to combat; and there were uncertainties among the propertied elite concerning the political wisdom of arming such a number of ordinary people.³⁰ Moreover, it is likely that many enlisted in Volunteer corps

²⁷ *Desultory Thoughts* (1794) was one such pamphlet.

²⁸ D.G. Vaisey, 'The Pledge of Patriotism: Staffordshire and the Voluntary Contribution, 1798', in M.W. Greenslade (ed.), *Essays in Staffordshire History* (Staffordshire Record Society, 1970), pp.209-23.

²⁹ Clive Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars 1793-1815* (London, 1979), p.38; Dickinson, 'The French Revolution and Counter Revolution in Britain', p.253; J.R. Western, 'The Volunteer Movement as an Anti-Revolutionary Force', *English Historical Review*, 71 (1956), 603-14; J.E. Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement of the French Wars, 1793-1815: Some Contexts', *Historical Journal*, 32 (1989), 867-891. See also PRO HO 42/29/281-8, William Ogilvie to [Dundas], [March 1794]; Arthur Young, in *The Annals of Agriculture*, xviii (1792), 495; *ibid.*, xxvi (1796), 516-21; *ibid.*, xxvii (1796), 49-54, 528-38; *ibid.*, xxviii (1797), 177-87, 441-3; *idem.*, *The Example of France A Warning to Britain* (4th edition: London, 1793), pp.139-142; *idem.*, *An Idea of the Present State of France, and of the Consequences of the Events Passing in that Kingdom* (2nd edition: London, 1795), pp.34-6; *idem.*, *National Danger, and the Means of Safety* (London, 1797); M. Bentham-Edwards (ed.), *The Autobiography of Arthur Young with Selections from his Correspondence* (London, 1898), pp.203-6; James Rennell, *War With France the Only Security of Britain, at the Present Momentous Crisis: Set Forth in an Earnest Address to His Fellow-Subjects, by an Old Englishman* (London, 1794), p.13; Somerville, *A Short Address; Thoughts on the Defence of These Kingdoms* (London, 1796), pp.2-34, 57-81; the *Sun*, 5 February 1794.

³⁰ Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English state', pp.159-160; Rev. Samuel Partridge, 'Observations on a Militia of Property', in the *Annals of Agriculture*, xxi (1793), 513-6.

less from social conviction than from social pressure to do so.³¹ Nevertheless, Volunteering showed the willingness of many loyalists to take to arms to defend the political and social order which protected their property; it also served as a powerful weapon of visible propaganda by its drilling, uniforms and parades; and it provided opportunities for loyalist sermons to be preached and published, especially at ceremonies for the presentation of colours to individual companies.³² Its use as a weapon against domestic radicalism was held to be fully as important as its function of defence against a French invasion: as Sir James Grant of Inverness wrote to the Duke of Portland in 1798, 'they are fully as proper in the *Interior Highlands* as on the Coast—as they counteract the private Wandering disseminators of Sedition'.³³ Loyalists could also act as Special Constables during particularly alarming riots, such as the London 'crimp' riots of August 1794.³⁴

Loyalists practised intimidation on radicals in other ways. They broke up radical meetings, physically attacked them and their property, prosecuted the authors, printers and distributors of radical literature, offered rewards for evidence leading to the arrest of radicals, opposed licences to innkeepers whose public houses were used for radical meetings, refused to employ radicals, excluded them from clubs and withdrew custom from their businesses.³⁵ Victimization of suspected 'Jacobins', as Marilyn Morris notes, 'was sanctified by being carried out under the guise of protecting the King,' and it was encouraged by the lack of legal protection given to radicals and by the government's prosecution of prominent radicals for treason and sedition in 1793 and 1794.³⁶ Many people were anxious to dispel any taint of radicalism cast upon them: the *Sun* reported on 1 March 1793 that 'the respectable inhabitants of the Town of Dundee have stood forth in vindication of their character, against the unjust aspersions of disloyalty, and tendency to riot and sedition, which have been circulated, on account of the trifling riot that happened there.' This anxiety could only have been increased by the frequent claims made of wide national loyalty and unity. The *Sun* declared that the high numbers of sailors

³¹ Western, 'The Volunteer Movement', pp.611-2; see also Cookson, 'The English Volunteer Movement', p.890.

³² PRO HO 42/34/118, Newcastle Military Association, 28 January 1795.

³³ PRO HO 50/40, Sir James Grant to the Duke of Portland, 23 February 1798, postscript.

³⁴ John Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots of 1794', *International Review of Social History*, 16 (1971), 56.

³⁵ Dickinson, 'The French Revolution and the Counter-Revolution in Britain', p.254; idem., *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1995), pp.281-2; Mitchell, 'The Association Movement of 1792-3', pp.67-71; John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1983), pp.121-2.

³⁶ Marilyn Ann Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue in English Political Argument During the French Revolutionary Era', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1988), pp.193, 221-2; Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.391-2.

enlisting without the use of impressment in Edinburgh 'proved' that the lower as well as the upper classes were 'deeply impressed' with the justice and necessity of the war. Still more presumptuously, it claimed in September 1793 that the jury's verdict against Thomas Muir showed that 'the People in Scotland' would give no support to Jacobins.³⁷ Earl Fitzwilliam assured the House of Lords in 1794 that 'the west riding of Yorkshire was unanimous in its sentiments...satisfied with the measures of government in regard to the war, and grateful for the steps that had been taken to preserve us from the contamination of Jacobin doctrines.' Lord Gower claimed in 1798 that the same opinions were held by the whole country.³⁸

II

Robert Hole suggests that Burke influenced popular conservative pamphlets in the 'Rights of Man' debate more in terms of their general standpoint than in terms of their specific content. Their authors focused on different topics than those Burke addressed, and they relied less on solid argument and more on emotive appeal.³⁹ His argument may also be generally accepted in terms of the debate on the war against revolutionary France for, in their published responses to it, loyalists tended towards a slightly more crusading line than ministers but one less rigid than that of Burke. While they often presented the war as an ideological crusade, they also defended the deviations of ministers from the logic of a strictly crusading strategy. Moreover, they emphasized issues which were of most direct and immediate concern to the insular British public, those which would appeal to the emotions of national chauvinism and individual self-interest, and they paid less attention to the European questions which in different ways worried both Burke and the government, and to the philosophical possibilities which caused Burke so much anxiety.⁴⁰

Before the 1790s an ambivalent attitude towards the French had prevailed among the British people. French intellectual life and fashions were admired, particularly by the upper classes, and those who could afford it were keen to travel to France. There was even some sympathy for the early stages of the French Revolution among those who would later become staunch supporters of the war against France. William Playfair, who wrote several loyalist pamphlets, claimed that

³⁷ *The Sun*, 23 February 1793, 13 September 1793.

³⁸ *P.H.*, xxxi, 675, Earl Fitzwilliam, 30 May 1794; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 1545, Lord Granville Leveson Gower, 20 November 1798.

³⁹ Robert Hole, 'British Counter-revolutionary Popular Propaganda in the 1790s', in Jones (ed.), *Britain and Revolutionary France*, pp.53-69.

⁴⁰ See Black, *British Foreign Policy*, p.423.

against France. William Playfair, who wrote several loyalist pamphlets, claimed that he had been a member of the French National Guard earlier in the Revolution; and Arthur Young, who developed crusading opinions after the war broke out, had earlier published two volumes, entitled *Travels in France during the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789*, which were broadly sympathetic to the Revolution.⁴¹ There was also, however, a well-established anti-Gallicism at the forefront of British xenophobia. This had been fostered by military rivalry throughout the eighteenth century, so that France was seen as the 'natural' enemy of Britain. By the later part of the century, it was also thought by some that British admiration of French culture had gone almost so far as to be described as cultural conquest.⁴² In the Alien Bill debate on 21 December 1792, the Duke of Leeds said that 'he would always be so much of an Englishman, as to believe it unlikely that a Frenchman should be a friend of England.' Lord Abingdon said, a few months later, that 'he was born and bred, as his ancestors before him were, an Antigallican; that he had lived to be confirmed in these principles, to find that they were not falsely implanted in his mind'.⁴³ The *Sun* declared, in tones of high glee, on 19 March 1793: 'It is glorious, it is animating to see, that the old antigallican spirit which has so often led the British Arms to fame and victory is again roused, and that it reigns with increased ardour throughout the Nation.' It had been widely expected that the French armies would be soundly defeated by the Duke of Brunswick's offensive campaign in September 1792, and loyalists were shocked when the reverse occurred. They criticized the German armies' failure severely, but they agreed that the war between France and Austria and Prussia was entirely the responsibility of an aggressive France.⁴⁴

Many of the arguments used by loyalists to defend the justice and necessity of the British war against revolutionary France were very similar to those used by ministers, but they were less concerned about France's violations of international laws and treaties than the government, and more preoccupied by the need to defend

⁴¹ Playfair, *Thoughts on the Present State of French Politics*, p.24; Arthur Young, *Travels, During the Years 1787, 1788, and 1789. Undertaken more particularly with a View of ascertaining the Cultivation, Wealth, Resources, and National Prosperity of the Kingdom of France* (2 vols.: London, 1792); idem., *The Example of France A Warning to Britain* (first published 1793; 4th edition, London, 1794), pp.3-4.

⁴² Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830* (London, 1987), pp.72-3.

⁴³ *P.H.*, xxx, 160, the Duke of Leeds, 21 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 732, Lord Abingdon, 22 April 1793.

⁴⁴ William Black, *Reasons for Preventing the French, Under the Mask of Liberty, From Trampling Upon Europe* (London, 1792), p.4; *Remarks on a Pamphlet Published as Mr. Fox's Speech, at the Opening of the Parliament, Including Some Observations on the Nature and Causes of the Present War* (London, 1793), pp.46-7; *A Letter to the Right Hon. Charles James Fox; In Which is Proved the Absolute Necessity of an Immediate Declaration of War Against France* (London, 1793), pp.17-9; [John Jones], *Sentiments on a War With France* (London, 1793), p.31.

Britain and its property, constitution, religion and commerce. They were horrified by the atrocities committed by the revolutionaries, both within France and outside it, and many, who had previously sympathized with the Revolution or had been indifferent to it, began to revile it. The massacres of September 1792 appeared to confirm that anarchy prevailed in France, and the execution of Louis XVI re-emphasized the brutality and savagery of the revolutionaries. These events frightened British loyalists and caused them to worry that they and their king might not be invulnerable to similar treatment. *The Times* thought that, rather than by making verbal protests about the French king's execution, 'the combined Powers of Europe will better speak their regret by the noise of cannon bursting over the heads of these unparalleled workers of iniquity.' Poems and sermons were composed, and prints sold, to commemorate Louis, and some loyalists believed that Britain ought not to see such horrors perpetrated with impunity.⁴⁵

The poverty and chaos within France was trumpeted, especially in contrast with the blessings of living under the British constitution, in order to teach the lesson that the example of France was a terrible warning to Britain and any who sought speedy political change there—

No religion or laws the vile Jacobins own;
 Their God they deny, and their King they dethrone;
 To gain their own ends the poor people they cheat,
 Then leave them to starve, not a morsel to eat.⁴⁶

Almost more threatening to loyalists, however, especially after the war had broken out, were the fact that the French had invaded other states and had 'disorganized' the political and social order there themselves, and the fear that they might plan to do the same to Britain. The violence of the French revolutionary system, or 'Jacobinism', was terrible not only because of its example from within France, but also because the French were actively encouraging radicals elsewhere to follow suit and, indeed, taking a lead in imposing it on other countries. The Jacobins had failed to overturn the British constitution by underground methods and had now resorted to open warfare to achieve the same purpose. Since French principles were now being

⁴⁵ Murley, 'Origins of the War', pp.53-5; William Laurence Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct of the Present War with France; and of the Most Effectual Means of Obtaining a Speedy, a Secure, and an Honourable Peace: Together with some Observations on the Late Negotiation at Lisle* (London, 1798), pp.30-1; *The Times*, 17 and 18 December 1792, 5 February 1793; [Jones], *Sentiments on a War with France*, pp.34-5.

⁴⁶ *The Anti-Gallican Songster No. 1* (London, 1793), p.3; see also *Desultory Thoughts*, pp.vii-xxv; *The Times*, 19 December 1792, on Fox.

propagated by force of arms (though such conduct was contrary to those principles), it was necessary to resist them in the same manner.⁴⁷

The destruction of the continental balance of power by the revolutionaries' progress of conquest through the states of Europe was also a solid justification for war. France was greedy for territorial aggrandizement and its armies left governments in tatters in their wake. Robert Burns wrote: 'As to France, I was her enthusiastic votary in the beginning of the business.—When she came to show her old avidity for conquest...I altered my sentiments.'⁴⁸ While it was admitted that monarchical France had also been eager to expand its frontiers, it was maintained that the Revolution inevitably produced war, and war of a more barbaric and uncivilized nature than before.⁴⁹ More pertinent, however, was the memory that France harboured a permanent hatred for Britain, and the belief that this was now being manifested in various insidious designs to crush it.⁵⁰ Two of the reasons for the French invasion of the United Provinces were doubtless to enable France to pose a greater threat to Britain and its commerce, and to draw Britain into conflict against France, since it was certain that Britain would go to war to defend its ally, Holland.⁵¹ James Rennell thought it his duty 'to impress on [every Briton's] mind, that the progress of French arms and influence in Europe must infallibly lead to this catastrophe', the establishment of a French revolutionary government in Britain.⁵²

⁴⁷ *An Answer from John Bull to Thomas Bull* (London, 22 December 1792); Black, *Reasons for Preventing the French*, pp.10-11, 40-4; *Observations Upon the Present War with France* (Glasgow, 1793), p.6; Nicholas Vansittart, *Reflections on the Propriety of an Immediate Conclusion of Peace* (2nd edition: London, 1794), p.51; Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct of the Present War*, pp.33-4.

⁴⁸ Robert Burns, quoted in Arthur Palmer Hudson and Virginia Mary Hudson, "'The Coast of France How Near!'" French Invasion and English Literature, 1793-1805', in *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, xl (1941), 275; Black, *Reasons for Preventing the French*, p.10; *P.H.*, xxx, 291-3, Lord Beauchamp, 1 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1112-1126, Lord Mornington, 21 January 1794; Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct of the Present War*, pp.28-30.

⁴⁹ [Maurice Morgan], *Considerations on the Present Internal and External Condition of France* (London, 1794), pp.7, 13-4, 38-9; Black, *Reasons for Preventing the French*, p.11; Herbert Marsh, *The History of the Politicks of Great Britain and France* (2nd edition, 2 vols.: London, 1800), i, 127-132, 151.

⁵⁰ *One Penny-worth More, or a Second Letter from Thomas Bull to His Brother John* (London, 12 December 1792); 'The Englishman and the Frenchman', in *Liberty and Property Preserved Against Republicans and Levellers, A Collection of Tracts*, iii ([1792]), 6-7.

⁵¹ Black, *Reasons for Preventing France*, pp.8, 22-5; *A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Charles James Fox, Upon the Dangerous and Inflammatory Tendency of His Late Conduct in Parliament* (London, 1793), p.47; NMM, MEL/2, 'Hints on the War', William Craig Harborne to Henry Dundas, 7-9 January 1793; *The Times*, 4 December 1792.

⁵² Rennell, *War With France the Only Security of Britain*, p.10, 12; see also *Desultory Thoughts*, p.91; [Theodore Price], *More Advice from Job Nott* (Birmingham, 20 February 1795), pp.6-7; 'The Plot Found Out. A Dialogue Between Three Members of the Jacobin Club in France', in *Liberty and Property*, iii ([1792]), 1-4.

Loyalist writers therefore defended the British government's sincerity in its initial attempt to maintain neutrality towards revolutionary France and claimed that France was the original aggressor. Considering the pains Pitt had taken to achieve financial stability, it was argued, it was unlikely that he would have chosen to throw that away out of the desire to fight France. Dr. William Black argued that not to have resisted French hostility would have been 'to prefer the certainty of dishonour and the probability of ruin, to the favourable chances of arms and success.' Herbert Marsh went further, contending that war had not simply been the lesser of two evils; rather, the government had had no choice at all in the matter, since France had been the aggressor, showing a markedly belligerent attitude towards Britain and Europe for months before February 1793 and eventually issuing the declaration of war to Britain and Holland. Since France was implacably resolved on hostilities with Britain, prevarication and negotiation could be of no avail; at best they could only delay the conflict, perhaps until France was yet more powerful.⁵³

In this world, loyalists claimed, war was an unavoidable evil. Since this conflict was just and necessary, the British people should simply be glad that so much stood in their favour concerning it.⁵⁴ In the long term, it would be better for commerce, not worse, that Britain should go to war than that it should stand by and let France proceed in its programme of destruction. Indeed, war offered Britain the opportunity of seizing rich French colonies in the East and West Indies.⁵⁵ Britain had ample resources to sustain a heavy conflict, especially relative to the French.⁵⁶ They declared that there was wide public enthusiasm for the war—'more perfect assent was never given to any war'—and that it would surely result in great glory for Britain.⁵⁷

The general objective of the European war against revolutionary France, according to British loyalists, was to restore the continental balance of power. This meant dispossessing France of all its recent conquests and fencing it in inside its old

⁵³ *P.H.*, xxx, 324, the Earl of Carlisle, 1 February 1793; *Remarks on a Pamphlet, Published as Mr. Fox's Speech*, pp.26-7; *Reasons Against National Despondency; in Refutation of Mr. Erskine's View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War* (London, 1797), pp.37-47, 79-86; Black, *Reasons for Preventing the French*, p.48; Marsh, *History*, esp. vol. i, pp.iii-xi, xxii; *The Times*, 17 January 1793; *P.H.*, xxx, 81-2, Lord Sheffield, 15 December 1792.

⁵⁴ *Observations Upon the Present War with France*, pp.3-5.

⁵⁵ [Jones], *Sentiments on a War with France*, p.16; Rennell, *War with France the Only Security of Britain*, pp.14-15; *Three Words on the War* (Edinburgh, 1793), pp.4-9; James Edward Hamilton, *A Letter to the People of England Upon the Present Crisis* (London, 1793); *The Times*, 8 February 1793.

⁵⁶ [Jones], *Sentiments on a War with France*, pp.24-7; William Playfair, *A General View of the Actual Force and Resources of France, in January M.DCC.XCIII* (London, 1793); *The Times*, 5 February 1793.

⁵⁷ *P.H.*, xxx, 396, Ryder, 12 February 1793; [Jones], *Sentiments on a War with France*, pp.21, 35.

boundaries. They also wanted Britain to receive indemnity in return for its expenditure on the conflict.⁵⁸ Both of these aims were often couched in terms of the provision of a security against Jacobinism.⁵⁹ The most urgent aims of the war for loyalists were the defence of the British constitution and the defeat of radicalism and revolutionary principles in Britain. They feared that the radicals were fifth columnists and national enemies—particularly since they continued to imitate the French revolutionaries even after the outbreak of war, for instance in the British Convention held in Edinburgh in October 1793—and that they would be only too willing to assist a French invasion, in the hope of seeing a republic established in Britain.⁶⁰ The most effective way, therefore, of guarding the British constitution and crushing radical hopes would be by overturning the French revolutionary regime. It was necessary that a stable government should be established in France, in any case, if an eventual peace settlement was to be guaranteed. If this was a war of ambition, the Earl of Mansfield told the House of Lords, ‘it is the noblest ambition that ever actuated the mind of man. Its great object is, to restore the blessings of order and government to France, and, by that restoration, to secure to ourselves and the rest of Europe, those blessings which order and government can alone bestow.’⁶¹ The loyalist writers were more divided on the question of whether or not the restoration of the French monarchy ought to be an objective of the war, reflecting the ministers’ own doubts and disagreements. In response to Opposition accusations that the ministry harboured this aim, loyalists tended to deny it hotly and to insist that it was merely a preference, particularly after 1795, when the ministry had expressed its willingness to treat with any stable government in France.⁶² When not under Opposition fire, however, loyalists might advise that the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy would be the best way of re-establishing peace and stability in France and Europe.⁶³

Despite this ambivalence, loyalist pamphlets and propaganda did express their views of the war in terms of a crusade, matching government rhetoric, which

⁵⁸ *Three Words on the War*, p.11-12; Dallas, *Thoughts Upon Our Present Situation*, pp.51-4; Playfair, *Thoughts on the Present State of French Politics*, pp.58, 65-80; the *Sun*, 5 October 1795.

⁵⁹ See the *Sun*, 27 September 1793; *P.H.*, xxx, 1075, the Earl of Coventry, 21 January 1794.

⁶⁰ *The Times*, 12 February 1793; *Reasons Against National Despondency*, pp.19-25; *The Anti-Gallican Songster*, I, p.12.

⁶¹ Playfair, *Thoughts on the Present State of French Politics*, p.103; [Thomas Richard Bentley], *Considerations Upon the State of Public Affairs at the Beginning of the Year 1796* (London, 1796), pp.59-60; *P.H.*, xxx, 1077, the Earl of Mansfield, 21 January 1794. See also *The Times*, 19 September 1793.

⁶² See the *Sun*, 20, 21, 24 September 1793, 5 October 1795; *Reasons Against National Despondency*, pp.86-7; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1321-2, Lord Boringdon, 22 March 1798.

⁶³ Playfair, *Thoughts on the Present State of French Politics*, p.60; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1533, Charles Yorke, 21 February 1800.

was usually more Burkean than the actual opinions of ministers.⁶⁴ According to the *Sun* of 2 November 1793, it was 'a War of Virtue, Order and Religion, against Crime, Anarchy and Atheism'. 'Let us not deceive ourselves,' *The Times* was still warning on 27 September 1797. 'The animosity which the Jacobins of France entertain against us, is less the consequence of that ancient rivalry which has existed between both nations, than the necessary effect of that vigorous resistance which they experience on our part, to their plan of disorganizing the civilized world.'⁶⁵ It was a new kind of war in terms of scale, in terms of the aims of the enemy and, consequently, the aims of Britain itself, and also in terms of the resources used and means of carrying on the conflict. France fought not to subdue any particular state or to impose any particular religion, but to dissolve society itself and to abolish all religion. It was ready to squander all its capital as well as all its surplus wealth in its cause, and it had called its total manpower into requisition as well.⁶⁶

Later in the war, some loyalists began explicitly to deny that it was a war about opinions, agreeing with Charles Long's 'new era' analysis of the conflict—that is, that after 1795, the ideological element had largely evaporated, leaving only the residue of French territorial greed to be dealt with. 'I confess it is not now the French revolution I dread, but French greatness,' wrote Thomas Bentley in 1798.⁶⁷ Yet, like the government, the loyalists continued to fight a war against the 'practical opinions' as well as the 'speculative' opinions of France: a struggle not necessarily against democracy in France but against the aggression that that democracy ignited and against the imitation of French democratic principles in Britain.⁶⁸ They were always aware that it was a battle for the defence of the British political and social order, having been loyalists before they were called to be patriots, and they did not separate this from the conflict against France. They claimed to be the 'real' patriots, while radical or even reformist 'patriotism' which decried the need for the conflict was alleged to be a deception and a cover for base desires for a French invasion and

⁶⁴ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', pp.408-9, 437, 441; see also ch.2 part IV, above.

⁶⁵ See also Dallas, *Thoughts Upon Our Present Situation*, pp.3-4; *A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Charles James Fox...on his Late Conduct in Parliament*, p.44; the *Sun*, 1 March 1793; *The Times*, 6 March 1794.

⁶⁶ *Desultory Thoughts*, pp.79-81, 94; *Observations on the Present War with France*, p.5; *P.H.*, xxx, 611, Lord Beauchamp, 22 March 1793; *The Times*, 1 January 1793; Rennell, *War with France the Only Security of Britain*, pp.10-11; William Playfair, *The History of Jacobinism* (London, 1795), pp.628-631.

⁶⁷ [Thomas Richard Bentley], *Considerations Upon the State of Public Affairs, at the Beginning of the Year MDCCXCVIII. Part the First* (London, 1798), p.2. See Long, *The New Era of the French Revolution*; ch.2 pt. II, above.

⁶⁸ *The Times*, 8 February 1793; *P.H.*, xxx, 1199-1212, Lord Mornington, 21 January 1794. See also Schofield, 'English Conservative Thought', p.206.

the establishment of a British republic.⁶⁹ The French attempts to invade Ireland in 1796 and 1798 amid United Irishmen activity, the continued threat of a mainland invasion, the naval mutinies at Spithead and the Nore in 1797, and the reappearance of London Corresponding Society agitation in 1797 and 1798, meant that loyalists had to maintain their vigilance in the second half of the decade as well as in the earlier years of the war.⁷⁰ On 9 November 1796, the *Sun* expressed a fear that radicals throughout the country were plotting to join the supplementary militia, in order to obtain arms which they would then use for their own hostile and unlawful purposes.

In general, however, loyalist writers usually expressed optimism regarding not only the final outcome of the war, but also respecting individual campaigns and expeditions, since they were concerned to vindicate government strategy. The newspapers were particularly constant in their hopefulness. Over a week after the evacuation of Dunkirk (which *The Times* could hardly bring itself to mention), the *Sun* still clung to the hope that its capture 'may yet probably be numbered amongst the acquisitions of the Campaign'. 'It is impossible for the public mind to be more justly confident of any success, than that which is generally presumed upon the present occasion,' enthused *The Times* on the departure of the ill-fated expedition to Holland in 1799.⁷¹ Those at the forefront of the action, by contrast, such as Admiral Collingwood, were astonished and somewhat disconcerted by the force and energy France could mount:

...is it not astonishing that the french who we have despised, ruined in their finances, supplied with great difficulty with stores and almost all Europe at war with them—shou'd meet us at sea with a fleet superior to ours—it is leaving too much to fortune & Chance—great as the skill of Lord Howe is, and we have had nothing like him—it is not right to oppose us to a force that chance might give a victory to.⁷²

Others, however, removed from the scenes of battle, often argued that France must collapse, sooner or later, from the rigours of the revolutionary warfare she pursued,

⁶⁹ *The Times*, 12 September 1801; *Desultory Thoughts*, pp.77-8, 95-6; 'The Bees and Drones', in *The Dog and Bitch, and the Bees and Drones: Fables. With Applications, Moral and Political, adapted to the Times* (Leeds, [1795]), pp.40-56; *Reasons Against National Despondency*, p.88.

⁷⁰ See 'The Republicans to the Devil', in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, lxiv (June 1794), 558, and also in Betty T. Bennett, *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism: 1793-1815* (New York and London, 1976), pp.113-5; *The Times*, 31 May 1797, on the responsibility for the naval mutiny being attributed to London radicals.

⁷¹ *The Sun*, 17 September 1793, and also 24 September 1793; *The Times*, 14 August 1799. See also, for instance, the *Sun*, 1 March 1793, on the Dutch campaign; the *Sun*, 17 and 28 September 1793, and *The Times*, 25 September 1793, on the capture of Toulon.

⁷² NMM, COL/14, f.3, Collingwood to the Rev. Alexander Carlyle, 10 June 1794.

especially because of the depreciation of the *assignat* and because of the republic's requisitioning of resources and manpower. 'In a word,' declared *The Times*, 'we may describe France as a miserable wretch under the influence of rage, or a burning fever, which occasions efforts beyond the natural strength, but which terminate by debility, and finally produce death.'⁷³ British and allied successes were loudly celebrated as they happened, and constantly listed to cheer and convince doubters. The European allies might sometimes suffer losses and defeats, but British arms were always to be praised.⁷⁴

Those who bore the British arms were particularly honoured. British soldiers, and particularly British sailors, were almost universally treated favourably in the loyalist press. British sailors were presented as courageous, honest and full of hearty common sense, and their commanders added wisdom and prudence to these virtues. The Royal Navy was Britain's surest defence, equal to whatever calls might be made upon it. Even during the agony of the mutinies of 1797, the worst that was said of the great majority of the sailors involved was that they must have been misguided and deluded.⁷⁵ British soldiers were described as brave and ultra-loyal subjects of their King and Country, and the loyalist newspapers took every opportunity to assure their countrymen at home that they were healthy and in good spirits.⁷⁶ Britain, in fact, was crucially important in the European struggle against revolutionary France, according to the loyalist writers. It had stood in the breach for civilized society, saving it from the revolutionary torrent, and Pitt was lauded and honoured for his leading role as 'the *Saviour of Europe*'.⁷⁷ One pamphleteer went so far as to forecast

⁷³ *The Times*, 11 February 1793; see also Rennell, *War With France the Only Security of Britain*, p.11; Playfair, *History of Jacobinism*, p.32; [Bentley], *Considerations upon...Public Affairs...1796*, pp.25-34.

⁷⁴ See *P.H.*, xxxiii, 406, J.H. Addington, 10 April 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 1331, the Earl of Romney, 22 March 1798; Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, pp.68-79; the *Sun*, 2 January 1800. See also various poems in Bennett, *British War Poetry*, e.g. pp.115-6, 130-2 on the Glorious First of June; 202-3 on Camperdown; 210-1 on Cape St. Vincent, 221-3 on Aboukir Bay. There is also a collection of poems and songs celebrating Duncan's victory at Camperdown in 1797 among his papers in NMM, DUN/19.

⁷⁵ William Francis Sullivan, *The Test of Union and Loyalty: A New Piece, on the Present War with France, 1795* (Margate, 1795), p.7; the *Sun*, 21 September 1793, on Lord Hood; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 748, Lord Romney, 30 May 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 811, Hobhouse, 2 June 1797; *The Times*, 21 April 1797. See also poems in Bennett, *British War Poetry*, pp.216-7, 219-20, 237, 249-50, 256-8.

⁷⁶ [Theodore Price], *The Life and Adventures of Job Nott* (11th edition: Birmingham, 1798), 18-19; *The Times*, 22 February 1793; the *Sun*, 7 March 1793, 12 September 1793. See also poems in Bennett, *British War Poetry*, pp.120-1, 223-4, 233-5, 250-1; and [Mrs. Jane West], *The Infidel Father* (3 vols.: London, 1802), iii, 197-8.

⁷⁷ Thomas Maurice, *The Crisis of Britain: A Poem, Addressed to the Right Hon. William Pitt, on the Threatened Invasion of These Kingdoms, By the French, in A.D.1798* (2nd edition: London, 1803), esp. pp.9-12; David Rivers, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Prosecuting the War with France with Vigour and Energy: With Remarks on the Scarcity of Provisions, and Particularly Bread. In a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1800), p.9.

that 'France herself, if ever that country can be grateful, will one day own the obligation [to Britain] as all Europe does now.'⁷⁸

In examining the conduct of the war, loyalist writers both discussed domestic tactics and defended international strategy. They clearly feared French republican emissaries, and they approved of repressive measures to minimize their impact on the country (the Alien Act of December 1792 and the Traitorous Correspondence Act of May 1793), and also the legal measures taken to suppress British radical activity (the suspension of habeas corpus in 1794 and 1798, the Two Acts of 1795, the Seduction from Duty and Allegiance Act of 1797, the Suppression of Seditious and Treasonable Societies Act of 1799 and the Anti-Combination Act of 1800). These might look tyrannical at first sight, it was acknowledged, but they existed for the protection of the liberty of British subjects. Indeed, Gayle Trusdel Pendleton estimates that 'Popular opinion would probably have approved considerably more repressive legislation than Pitt requested', and she notes that measures of suppression were endorsed in at least 130 different pamphlets.⁷⁹ The monarchy, more than ever, was the focal point of conservative ideology. George III symbolized British stability and rectitude against French republican chaos and violence and, later, against Napoleonic 'treachery' and 'tyranny'. The loyalist press took great pride in royal ceremonial during the war, and even greater pride in the active involvement of members of the royal family in the armed forces.⁸⁰ A common plea in loyalist recommendations for dealing with the internal enemy was for a moral reformation among the British people in general, that British morality might shine the brighter against French and radical immorality, and that it might be found deserving of victory over both enemies by God. Many loyalists thus identified themselves with the existing 'reformation of manners' movement.⁸¹

⁷⁸ [Bentley], *Considerations upon...Public Affairs...1796*, pp.96-7; see also William Francis Sullivan, 'Un Petit Morceau; or the year 1795' and 'The Sons of Neptune' in *The Test of Union and Loyalty*, pp.11-13, 15-16.

⁷⁹ *Desultory Thoughts*, p.39; *Remarks on a Pamphlet Published as Mr. Fox's Speech*, pp.23-4; *A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Charles James Fox, Upon...His Late Conduct in Parliament*, pp.49-55; the *Sun*, 24 May 1797, on the naval mutiny and its repression; Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.284.

⁸⁰ Vincent Carretta, *George III and the Satirists From Hogarth to Byron* (Athens and London, 1990), pp.505-513; Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', p.238-82; Linda Colley, 'The Apotheosis of George III', in *Past and Present*, 102 (1984), 97-129. I argue (ch. 8) that caricatures generally fit more usefully into an analysis of public opinion than into one of activist loyalism, but Carretta's argument here applies equally to loyalist writing. See also *The Anti-Gallican Songster*, i, 14-15; *The Times*, 5 February 1793; the *Sun*, 28 February 1793, 12 September 1793.

⁸¹ For the reformation of manners movement, see Joanna Innes, 'Politics and Morals: The Reformation of Manners Movement in Late Eighteenth-century England' in Hellmuth (ed.), *The Transformation of Political Culture*, pp.57-118; Richard A. Soloway, 'Reform or Ruin: English Moral Thought during the First French Republic', *Review of Politics*, xxv (1963), 110-128; M.J.D. Roberts, 'The Society for the Suppression of Vice and its Early Critics, 1802-1812', *Historical*

Loyalists also called insistently for political unity within Britain behind the Pitt administration during the war, and they were loud in their disapproval of the Foxite Opposition in Parliament. Without internal unity, warned Dallas, 'we shall...perish like other great empires, who fell more from the internal wounds of civil discord, than the lasting victories of invading enemies.'⁸² The Foxites were accused of being secret supporters of the French, of encouraging the radical movement in Britain, and of fostering discontent among the ordinary people. John Bowdler, in his list of moral reforms for different classes of people in British society, disdained to offer any advice to Opposition MPs; it was vain to waste words on those who were ready to sacrifice the public good to their private ambition, he said—'their consciences must be seared with a hot iron'. It was unpatriotic to remain in Opposition during a war, whether or not one agreed with its grounds or necessity, and it exposed the nation's frailties to the enemy. Such men would be entirely unfit to replace the present administration, even were it desirable that Pitt and his colleagues should be dismissed.⁸³

Loyalists called on the one hand for unity, vigour and loyalty from the whole British population, and on the other for government ministers to do what they could to promote morale. Several pamphlets claimed that 'a free people, uniting as one man, for its defence, is invincible'. William Playfair thought that the Allied governments were too negative, too willing to publicize their defeats and too hesitant to dispel false reports of French military brilliance.⁸⁴ Scarcity of grain and commercial problems were not caused by the war, loyalists maintained. Other explanations were provided, such as the corrupt activities of monopolists, the divine wrath presently resting on the nation, a simple supply and demand imbalance, and the sway held by materialism and luxury over the country. Nicholas Vansittart pointed out that the Continental war would have affected British trade whether or not Britain had participated.⁸⁵ The various financial measures adopted by ministers

Journal, 26 (1983), 159-176. For loyalist concern in the 1790s, see Thomas Lister, *Opposition Dangerous* (London, 1798), pp.19-20; [Price], *More Advice from Job Nott*, p.4; John Bowdler, *Reform or Ruin: Take Your Choice!* (5th edition: London, 1798); Hannah More et al, *Cheap Repository Tracts in Works* (6th edition, 11 vols.: London, 1853), vols. i-iii.

⁸² Dallas, *Thoughts Upon Our Present Situation*, pp.62-3.

⁸³ See, for example, *A Letter to the Right Hon. Charles James Fox [on the] Necessity of an Immediate Declaration of War*, pp.3-4, 12-13; *Reasons for National Despondency*, pp.18-19, 27-32, 91; Bowdler, *Reform or Ruin*, p.16; Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, pp.50-1, 85-97; Lister, *Opposition Dangerous*, pp.3-8; *Advice to the People, on the Prospect of a Peace*, p.7; *Letter from Gerard Noel Edwards, Esq. M.P. to the New-Town Secretary of the Friends of the People* (Edinburgh and London, 1793), pp.9-12.

⁸⁴ Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, p.98; *Our Good Old Castle on the Rock*, pp.21-3; Playfair, *History of Jacobinism*, pp.715-6.

⁸⁵ William Playfair, *Better Prospects to the Merchants and Manufacturers of Great Britain* (London, 1793), pp.29-34; Rivers, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Prosecuting the War*, pp.16-19; *Inquiry into*

to pay for the war were defended more or less without complaint. If the country supported the war, it must be prepared to pay for it and to make retrenchments if necessary.⁸⁶

The loyalists were happy to suggest various improvements in the regulation of the army and the navy. They were not enthusiastic about crimping and the press-gang. Some tried to resign their readers to making the best of a bad system; others suggested that a national system of recruiting should be established instead.⁸⁷ Representations were also made that courts-martial were in need of reform, that demobilized soldiers and sailors must be paid before being dismissed, and that young sailors required some form of formal education; but the government's scheme for building barracks for soldiers in Britain received applause from loyalists, who were glad that soldiers would be more readily available in the event of civil unrest but also relieved that they could be kept by themselves, out of trouble.⁸⁸

As for strategies to be adopted to deal with the French enemy, the necessity of vigour and resolution were again stressed. The government was advised to 'Strike home with as little noise and as much energy as possible,—Strike! with as determin'd Spirit, the Great Chatham did so, and he prosper'd. Such a noble and resolute Conduct damps the fire of the Enemy'.⁸⁹ Most loyalist writing, however, was concerned with defensive measures and with the threat of invasion. Newspapers periodically reported the sighting of preparations being made on the French coast for an attack on Britain, either as a diversionary tactic or in real earnest.⁹⁰ Ireland was a particular source of worry, especially as it seemed that the invaders would attract greater support among the local people there—'the whole People will be in motion,

the Causes and Remedies of the Late and Present Scarcity and High Price of Provisions, in a letter to the Rt. Hon. Earl Spencer (London, 1800), p.51; Alexander Annesley, *Strictures on the True Cause of the Present Alarming Scarcity of Grain and Other Provisions*, pp.8-10; Vansittart, *Reflections on...an Immediate Conclusion of Peace*, pp.53-5; 'The Riot; or, Half a Loaf is better than no Bread. In a Dialogue Between Jack Anvil and Tom Hod' [1795], in the British Library collection of songs and broadsides at 648.c.26, f.91.

⁸⁶ Lister, *Opposition Dangerous*, pp.12-27; [Thomas Richard Bentley], *Considerations Upon the State of Public Affairs, in the Year MDCCXCVIII. Part the Third* (London, 1798), pp.30-1, 38-40. For a more critical view, see *A General Address to the Representatives of Great Britain, on Important National Subjects, Agitating at the Present Period, by an Elector, M.A.* (London, 1797), pp.48-61.

⁸⁷ For examples of the former, see [Price], *The Life and Adventures of Job Nott*, p.12; the *Sun*, 13 February 1794. For the latter, see *Thoughts on the Defence of These Kingdoms*, p.34; NMM, MEL/2, 'Plans for Manning the Navy', 16 April 1791, 13 February 1793 and 19 May 1793, by 'J.S.'

⁸⁸ *Thoughts on the Defence of These Kingdoms*, pp.35-48; the *Sun*, 15 and 23 February 1793; *P.H.*, xxx, 479, Humphrey Minchin, 22 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 482-3, Lord Beauchamp, 22 February 1793; though see *P.H.*, xxxii, 929-931, General Smith, 8 April 1796 for one loyalist who had very negative views on barracks.

⁸⁹ NMM, MEL/2, 'Hints on the War', William Craig Harborne to Henry Dundas, 7-9 January 1793.

⁹⁰ For instance, *The Times*, 27 January 1794, 4 and 15 February 1794.

& deal destruction, wherever they go', gloomily forecast Lord St. Vincent.⁹¹ Dean Tucker wrote a long piece 'On Invasion' for the *Sun*, in which he conducted a detailed estimate of what the French would have to do to achieve a successful incursion. He concluded that the people of Britain had very little to fear, since the enterprize was on too large a scale for French technical and financial capabilities.⁹² The general attitude of loyalists was a mixture of this confidence that a French invading force would be 'destined to feed the fishes of our seas', but that, none the less, extensive preparations ought to be made in case the French should make the attempt and indeed to persuade them not to do so.⁹³ Domestic artillery and cavalry should be substantially increased, so that the defending forces would be considerably superior to the invaders; light cavalry forces should also be formed, to move around the country when necessary; and fishing boats should be armed and fully manned. More signal towers and ammunitions batteries ought to be built, and groups of expert marksmen, such as sportsmen and gamekeepers, should be gathered. The finance and capital of the country ought to be guarded adequately, since the revolutionaries were men 'whose devotion to wealth, is paramount to all other obligations.'⁹⁴

The Royal Navy was the pride and joy of British loyalists, and they emphasized its importance in the war against France. It was Britain's major offensive weapon as well as its best defence; it counterbalanced French power on land; and it allowed Britain to seize enemy colonies.⁹⁵ The large sums of money spent by the government on the allies were defended on the grounds that they were a necessary way to harass and wear France down, and that they were cheap at the price. Moreover, if the rest of Europe did not band together against France, the revolutionaries could much more easily defeat each individual nation. The *Sun*, on 18 September 1793, was particularly optimistic—the union of the allies, it claimed, was 'indissoluble'—but other loyalists also expressed great confidence and trust in the allies, more, one suspects, in partisan bombast than in real faith, particularly as

⁹¹ See NMM, NEP/5, ff.31-2, Lord St. Vincent to Evan Nepean, 16 April 1799; *ibid.*, NEP/7, f.85, same to same, 16 May 1799; *ibid.*, COL/14, f.27, Collingwood to Carlyle, 24 August 1801.

⁹² The *Sun*, 14 and 15 February 1794.

⁹³ [Bentley], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the First*, p.65. See also *The Times*, 27 and 28 December 1797; *P.H.*, xxxi, 979-986, Lord Mulgrave, 30 December 1794; and poems in Bennett, *British War Poetry*, pp.211-4.

⁹⁴ *Thoughts on the Defence of These Kingdoms*, pp.49-53; NMM, MEL/6, Capt. A. Blair to John Bruce, 3 March 1798; *ibid.*, MEL/9, Col. W. Fullarton to the Duke of Portland, Sept. 1796. See also *P.H.*, xxxiii, 195-6, Col. Wood, 28 March 1797; and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *A Letter to the Right Hon. the Earl of Charlemont on the Tellograph, and on the Defence of Ireland* (Dublin, 1797).

⁹⁵ Rennell, *War With France the Only Security of Britain*, p.11; *P.H.*, xxxv, 869-70, the Duke of Montrose, 2 February 1801; [Thomas Richard Bentley], *Considerations Upon the State of Public Affairs at the Beginning of the Year MDCCXCVIII Part the Second* (London, 1798), pp.65-8.

they easily switched to blaming the allies and praising the unique virtues of Britain as the occasion demanded.⁹⁶ Against the armed neutrality of 1801, *The Times* was defiant, if rueful: 'If the justest league which was ever formed in the history of man has failed before our eyes, from the selfishness or madness of our Allies, can we fear that the present Combination, containing in its bosom all the seeds of dissolution...can long endure?'⁹⁷

The strategy of interference within France did not receive a great deal of loyalist comment, but those who discussed it were generally supportive. They quoted writers on the laws of nations; they argued that France had interfered in numerous other countries, that attack was the best form of defence, that the ministry only undertook such a repugnant strategy reluctantly, and that France had shown itself unfit to take political decisions for itself. In any case, the *Sun* reminded its readers, Britain had been invited into France by the French counter-revolutionaries.⁹⁸ Attitudes to the *émigrés* were more mixed. Some approved of the help given to them by the British government and by individual British subjects; others thought that they should be employed in the British armed forces, but not paid levy-money, since they ought to have sufficient other incentive to fight the Revolution.⁹⁹ The strategy of giving substantial aid to the counter-revolution in France received only limited support, however.¹⁰⁰

The ministry was loyally defended and upheld against Opposition and anti-war criticism. It was insisted that only the present administration could save the country from the horrors of the French revolution and its armies.¹⁰¹ This did not mean that loyalists were averse to offering their own criticisms, whether from genuine frustration or in order to show their own independence and credibility. Loyalist MPs might claim to vote with the government less because they agreed wholeheartedly with its measures than because they believed disunity to be

⁹⁶ *Reasons Against National Despondency*, pp.175-6; *P.H.*, xxx, 1314, Powys, 31 January 1794; *The Times*, 10 December 1796; *P.H.*, xxx, 1089, Lord Clifden, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 1539, 1541, Lords Romney and Mulgrave, November 1798; Bennett, *British War Poetry*, pp.178-9.

⁹⁷ 26 January 1801.

⁹⁸ Brown, *An Examination into the Causes and Conduct*, pp.19-21, 56; [Morgan], *Considerations on the ...Condition of France*, pp.41, 45; [Jones], *Sentiments on a War with France*, pp.32-3; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1134, the Earl of Abingdon, 6 January 1795; Playfair, *Thoughts on the Present State of French Politics*, pp.30-67, 87-90; the *Sun*, 20 September 1793.

⁹⁹ *Remarks on a Pamphlet Published as Mr. Fox's Speech*, pp.82-3; the *Sun*, 19 November 1796; *P.H.*, xxxi, 373, William Baker, 11 April 1794; *The Dutch Expedition Vindicated*, pp.17-23.

¹⁰⁰ [Bentley], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the First*, pp.23-31; *The Times*, 24 January 1794.

¹⁰¹ The *Sun*, 22 March 1793; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 597-600, I.H. Browne, 19 May 1797; NMM, NEP/4, Lord St. Vincent to Nepean, 5 April 1797.

prejudicial to the war effort.¹⁰² *The Times*, however, came close to questioning the validity of debate on the war at all when it declared on 20 September 1793 that there was something very ‘presumptuous in knowing better than Ministers what ought, and what ought not to be done’. It was frequently argued, concerning spectacular failures such as Dunkirk in 1793 and the Dutch campaign in 1799, that the final outcome of a campaign should not be considered the main criterion for determining the wisdom of its strategy, since all sorts of chance elements might combine to foil a perfectly good plan.¹⁰³

Except between 1796 and 1797 and after October 1801, when the ministry was attempting to negotiate a settlement with France, loyalists allowed little of their natural desire for peace to show in their discussions of the issue, except in private letters, or in poems and songs which placed the blame for the continuance of the war squarely on French shoulders.¹⁰⁴ They argued that France should initiate talks, having been the original aggressor, but they expressed grave doubts that the French government had any intention of doing so.¹⁰⁵ It had never expressed any interest in peace and, even should that change, its word was hardly to be trusted, in view of the wake of violated treaties and professions trailing behind it. War with all established governments was inherent to the Revolution, as the infamous decrees of November and December 1792 had testified, and these had not been repealed. Moreover, the French continued to hate Britain. The Republic insisted on setting the terms and arrangements of all negotiations, which was a contradiction in terms and evidence of its belligerence.¹⁰⁶ Loyalist writers and MPs bristled with rage at the ‘insolence’ of the French rulers towards Great Britain—particularly the insulting treatment and

¹⁰² [Bentley], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the First*, pp.66-8; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 189-90, the Earl of Romney, 27 March 1797; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 606 and 610, Miles Peter Andrews and Sir Gilbert Heathcote, 19 May 1797.

¹⁰³ *The Sun*, 12 September 1793, on Dunkirk; *P.H.*, xxxi, 251-2, Lord Mulgrave, 10 April 1794, on Toulon; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 587-8, Bryan Edwards, 18 May 1797 on St. Domingo; *ibid.*, xxxv, 981-93, Sir James Pulteney, 19 February 1801, on the Ferrol expedition; *The Dutch Expedition Vindicated*; [Theodore Price], *Birmingham in Danger! Of Which Job Nott Gives Fair Warning* (Birmingham, 30 September 1799).

¹⁰⁴ PRO 30/12/17/2, ff.109-112, 117, 121-2, 125, Edward Law to John Law, 4 January 1794, 29 October 1796, 3 May 1797, 27 July 1801; NMM, WYN/102, Admiral Lord Gardner to Admiral Sir Charles Morice Pole, 7 and 23 August 1797, 2 September 1798; *ibid.*, Sir John Borlase Warren to Pole, 21 September 1797; *ibid.*, COL/14 ff.22, 24, Collingwood to Carlyle, 17 April and 7 December 1800; ‘Ode to Peace’, in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*, lxvii (August 1797), 693-4, and also in Bennett, *British War Poetry*, pp.200-2.

¹⁰⁵ *The Sun*, 2 October and 14 December 1795, 18 December 1796; Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, pp.60-1, 82.

¹⁰⁶ Vansittart, *Reflections on...an Immediate Conclusion of Peace*, pp.110-6; *Desultory Thoughts*, pp.81-2, 107-11; [Bentley], *Considerations upon...Public Affairs...1796*, pp.90-4; *A General Address to the Representatives of Great Britain*, pp.33-4; *Three Words on the War*, p.10.

dismissal of Lord Malmesbury at Paris in 1796¹⁰⁷—and they insisted that Britain, defended by its splendid navy, had no need to make a humiliating peace by bowing and scraping to such an arrogant and depraved rival. Such a peace had no chance of lasting. The Earl of Morton ‘professed himself exceedingly hurt at the idea of this country stooping to sue for peace.’ The terms suggested by the French rulers at the negotiations of 1796 and 1797 were utterly unacceptable, particularly the claim that France should retain, while Britain yielded, all conquests of war. ‘God forbid,’ wrote one pamphleteer, ‘that this Country should be reduced to such a contemptible state of imbecility, that we are to part with every muniment against the aggressions of France, through idle hopes of her friendship, or unmanly terror at her enmity.’¹⁰⁸

Because Jacobinism was still a threat—which was still being claimed as late as 1800¹⁰⁹—a stable and dependable peace could not be achieved, and so it was necessary to press on with vigorous warfare until this was no longer the case. The governments of the French Republic were too short-lived, and their foreign policy unacceptably ambitious. ‘Hope of peace there is none,’ Admiral Collingwood wrote in February 1799, ‘it is impossible to have a peace which wou’d not be more dangerous to the country than a continuance of the war.’ ‘If we may not sleep, why so eager to lie down?’ asked Thomas Bentley. It was possible to wage war with anarchy, but not to make peace with it.¹¹⁰ Moreover, it was naïve to believe that if peace were established the French Republic would collapse internally.¹¹¹ It would therefore be both disgraceful and dangerous to negotiate. ‘Treat with the Convention!’ expostulated Sir Richard Hill in the House of Commons. ‘He would as soon treat with the Palace of Pandemonium.’ To do so would be to acknowledge its government as legitimate, which would imply that Britain was prepared to submit to its further demands.¹¹² Only military victory was likely to secure a real peace. Thomas Lister wrote in 1798 that he believed that ‘the war is now impervious to negotiation, and that peace is only to be purchased by the dear experiment of our

¹⁰⁷ *The Sun*, 4 and 18 November 1796, 26 December 1796; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 424, Thomas Tyrwhitt Jones, 10 April 1797.

¹⁰⁸ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 858, the Earl of Glasgow, 2 November 1797; *ibid.*, xxxi, 962 and 969, Earl Camden and the Earl of Morton, 30 December 1794; *the Sun*, 30 December 1796; *Reasons Against National Despondency*, p.167.

¹⁰⁹ *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1447, Wilberforce, 17 February 1800.

¹¹⁰ *The Times*, 21 January 1794; NMM, COL/14, f.18, Collingwood to Carlyle, 25 February 1799; [Bentley], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the Second*, pp.45, 79-88; [Price], *Further Humble Advice from Job Nott*, p.7; *P.H.*, xxx, 1078, the Earl of Mansfield, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 991-5, Earl Temple, 8 November 1797; *the Sun*, 2 October 1795.

¹¹¹ [Morgan], *Considerations on the...Condition of France*, pp.41-2.

¹¹² *P.H.*, xxx, 447, Sir Richard Hill, 18 February 1793; *The Times*, 15 September 1795; *Remarks on a Pamphlet Published as Mr. Fox's Speech*, p.76.

arms'.¹¹³ The ministry's rejection of Bonaparte's offer of negotiations in December 1799 was stoutly defended; the French Consul himself was vilified as ambitious, unscrupulous and Jacobin, and his government condemned for being as precarious as its predecessors. 'It is a willing error to think we have refused a Peace,' declared *The Times*.¹¹⁴

It was counter-productive to show an over-anxiety for peace, therefore, for this would induce France to make even greater demands at a settlement, as the experience of other European countries made only too clear. It was not 'moderate' in ministers to sue for peace if that meant giving up security and honour.¹¹⁵ Indeed, loyalists suspected that many cries for peace came from those who would delight in the calamities that a premature peace would bring—radicals who wanted to see French political influence in Britain.¹¹⁶ Opposition MPs inflamed the people's desire for peace and used it to smear the administration with charges of corrupt self-interest.¹¹⁷ Peace ought not to be made merely to pander to public opinion if it was not otherwise justified. Nor were the hardships of war any reason to negotiate if the hardships of peace would be greater. 'The inconveniences we have hitherto sustained,' Sir Henry Mildmay told the Commons, 'are, by no means, commensurate with the extent of the interests we have at issue'; furthermore, he continued, 'Unparalleled as our external successes have been, they derive additional lustre from the increasing splendour of our internal opulence', for Britain's resources remained more than equal to the task of continuing the war.¹¹⁸

Very occasionally, strictures were delivered by war-weary or crotchety loyalists in Parliament on the Pitt administration's attitude to peace or its handling of negotiations; and there was some lack of confidence in the new administration under Henry Addington when it took office in March 1801.¹¹⁹ By and large, however, these arguments against negotiation changed little over the decade, except for the

¹¹³ Lister, *Opposition Dangerous*, p.11; *Reasons Against National Despondency*, p.185.

¹¹⁴ *Brief Reflexions on the Correspondence Between Lord Grenville and M. Otto, in August and September 1800* (London, 1800), pp.5-6; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1229, 1239-40, Lord Boringdon and the Earl of Carnarvon, 28 January 1800; Marsh, *History*, ii, 377-95; Rivers, *Thoughts on Prosecuting the War*, pp.10-15; the *Sun*, 8, 15, 16 and 25 January 1800; *The Times*, 23 January 1800.

¹¹⁵ *Reasons Against National Despondency*, pp.93-4; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1337, Lord Mulgrave, 22 March 1798; [Bentley], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the Second*, pp.73-7.

¹¹⁶ Rennell, *War With France the Only Security of Britain*, p.14; [Bentley], *Considerations upon...Public Affairs...1796*, p.17.

¹¹⁷ *Reasons Against National Despondency*, pp.156, 158-9; *Desultory Thoughts*, pp.92-3

¹¹⁸ [Bentley], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the Second*, pp.69-72; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1551, Sir Henry Mildmay, 20 November 1798; *Advice to the People on the Prospect of a Peace*, pp.6-7.

¹¹⁹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 991, the Duke of Leeds, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 425-6, Thomas Tyrwhitt Jones, 10 April 1797; *ibid.*, xxxv, 885, the Earl of Fife, 2 February 1801; *ibid.*, xxxv, 936-7, Henry Bankes, 3 February 1801; *ibid.*, xxxv, 1106, Earl Temple, 25 March 1801.

periods 1796-7 and 1801-2, when loyalists felt more relaxed about letting their own desire for peace show, since ministerial policy openly sought at least negotiations if not a settlement. These attempts allowed loyalists to argue with confidence that the British government was sincere in seeking peace and that the responsibility for continuing the conflict rested with France.¹²⁰ They also, however, felt obliged to justify these attempts to halt the conflict after so many declarations that it was vital to continue to wage it vigorously. Those loyalists who subscribed to the 'new era' theory that, after the fall of Robespierre, the French government had become much more moderate and stable, could reason that it was no longer necessary to engage in ideological warfare, for the conflict had again become a traditional eighteenth-century battle for territorial aggrandizement between Britain and France which could be ended whenever both sides agreed on a stalemate.¹²¹ The *Sun* trenchantly criticized Burke for arguing against the ministry's attempts to negotiate with France in 1796-7, in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, as 'Quixotic', 'intermeddling' and pernicious to the national interest—though, like the government and other loyalists, it sometimes reverted to talk of an ideological war against French and British Jacobins after the peace talks had failed.¹²² Others simply reasoned that, successful or not, peace negotiations could be used to rally the nation behind the government.¹²³

It was recognized by loyalists that a British insistence on an indemnity and on the liberation of the Belgic provinces from French rule in any peace terms would cause an obstacle to a settlement, but they maintained Britain's right to demand both for the sake of its future security. *The Times* was indignant at the charge of greed laid by some against this concern:

The War...is not as we have been perfidiously told, 'a War for Spice Islands and Sugar Colonies.' This is a language not to be endured. For all men feel it is a War for existence itself, and will any man who has heard the din of preparation from the shores of

¹²⁰ Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, pp.59, 86; *Reasons Against National Despondency*, pp.112-146, 171; *Brief Reflexions on the Correspondence between Grenville and Otto*, pp.3-4; *A General Address to the Representatives of Great Britain*, p.32; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 863, Lord Gwydir, 2 November 1797; *The Times*, 9 and 14 December 1795; the *Sun*, 30 December 1796.

¹²¹ [Bentley], *Considerations upon...Public Affairs...1796*, pp.34-46, 50-8, 61-2; [idem.], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the First*, pp.30-1; [idem.], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the Second*, pp.78-9.

¹²² See the *Sun*, 7, 12, 13 and 15 October 1796; and 22 November 1796; see also Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, pp.3-5; William Miles, *A Letter to Henry Duncombe, Esq., Member for the County of York, on the Subject of the Very Extraordinary Pamphlet, Lately Addressed by Mr. Burke, to a Noble Lord* (London, 1796), pp.90-7; *P.H.*, xxxvi, 141-2, Wilberforce, 3 November 1801.

¹²³ *A General Address to the Representatives of Great Britain*, pp.42-3; Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, pp.58-9; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1024, Wilberforce, 8 November 1797.

France, Belgium, and Holland, say if it be for Martinico or Ceylon that BONAPARTE meditates the invasion of our shores; if it be for our Sugars, or our Nutmegs, or our distant Isles that he thirsts and hungers, or for our very life-blood?¹²⁴

Some were consequently disappointed by the preliminaries and the eventual settlement of peace at Amiens and their distinctly lightweight character so far as indemnification went;¹²⁵ but many rejoiced full-heartedly in them, praising their 'moderation', and *The Times* discreetly refused to arbitrate between the divided views of ministers and ex-ministers.¹²⁶

III

For most loyalist writers, popular and otherwise, the main inspiration was the government's presentation of events and its justification of its conduct, a view of affairs which was considerably coloured by Burke's thinking, yet differing significantly from it. There was, however, a small minority of pamphleteers and journalists—some, indeed, who were Treasury-paid—who clearly agreed with Burke's opinions on the war much more closely than most, and whose writings reflected his influence much more truly.

While both loyalists and these 'war crusaders' recognized the French Revolution to be 'the common enemy of all governments, and of all establishments, religious and civil',¹²⁷ loyalists, influenced by government doubts and divisions, were far from certain that the primary object of the war ought to be the defeat and destruction of the Revolution through the restoration of the ancient French monarchy. They might have preferred this outcome, but ultimately they were prepared to treat for peace with any stable form of French government. Burke, on the other hand, was quite sure of the need for a thorough restoration of the French monarchical regime, and the crusading pamphleteers were to be found much nearer

¹²⁴ [Bentley], *Considerations upon...Public Affairs...1796*, pp.63-9, 94-6; Brown, *An Examination of the Causes and Conduct*, p.83; *Reasons Against National Despondency*, pp.162-5; [Bentley], *Considerations on...Public Affairs...1798, Part the Second*, pp.5-36; *The Times*, 12 September 1801 and also 21 July 1801.

¹²⁵ *P.H.*, xxxvi, 36-7, Lord Leveson Gower, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 175, the Earl of Warwick, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 730, Earl Camden, 13 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 755-6, Lord Folkestone, 13 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 778-81, Sir William Young, 13 May 1802.

¹²⁶ See Bennett, *British War Poetry*, pp.262-4, 274-6; *P.H.*, xxxvi, 29-36, Sir Edmund Hartopp and Mr. Lee, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 142-4, Wilberforce, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 791-4, General Maitland, 14 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 807-8, Mr. Bond, 14 May 1802; *The Times*, e.g. 29 April and 17 May 1802. On ministerial divisions, see pp.93-96 above.

¹²⁷ *The Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine; or, Monthly Political and Literary Censor* [hereafter *A-JR*], ii (January 1799), 12.

to his camp than to the government's. The ministry and the loyalists were more concerned about the secondary, effective principles of the French Revolution than with its primary, causal principles; that is, they were preoccupied with the impact of the Revolution on French foreign policy and on British radicalism. Burke and the war crusaders, although very conscious of these revolutionary products, were principally fixated by the fear of the original principles of liberty, equality and fraternity, and with the threat to the social order and to property all over Europe. 'In nations, as in individuals, principles are the main springs of action,' wrote John Bowles; 'every thing else that influences human conduct is accidental, and takes its colour and direction from principles.'¹²⁸ They thought that these principles could only be stamped out properly by the removal of the government they had created in France. As Philip Schofield has noted, most ministers thought that the threat would be removed if France could be restrained within its old frontiers and British radicalism suppressed; to Burke and the crusaders, it was necessary to destroy the whole ideology of the Revolution. '[Burke] was satisfied that ministers aimed to overthrow the Jacobin system, but unconvinced they were pursuing the most effectual means.'¹²⁹

According to H.T. Dickinson, it was the outbreak of war between Britain and France which 'persuaded the more militant conservatives in Britain that they must campaign to eradicate the cancer of French principles at their source.'¹³⁰ Almost to a man, they had until late 1792 supported the government's policy of isolation, neutrality and non-interference in French internal affairs, being much more concerned about the 'Rights of Man' debate in Britain than with the international situation.¹³¹ They were probably alerted to the volatility of Franco-British relations more directly by the general panic which gripped British loyalists in the winter of 1792-3 than by Burke's pre-war writings. Burke was almost alone in his interest in international politics and in his foresight regarding the war but, once they were convinced of its imminence, crusading pamphleteers and politicians were attracted to Burke's views on it and began to propagate them themselves.¹³²

¹²⁸ John Bowles, Article IV, *A-JR*, ii (January 1799), 86-7. See also Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English state', p.149; Article III, *A-J R*, ii (January 1799), 12.

¹²⁹ Schofield, 'British Politicians and French Arms', p.194.

¹³⁰ Dickinson, 'Britain and the Ideological Crusade Against the French Revolution', pp.166-7.

¹³¹ Philip Schofield cites two early pamphlets which agreed with Burke's insistence that Britain must interfere in France internally: [Graham Jenson], *Letters to Thomas Payne, in answer to his late publication on the Rights of Man. By a Member of the University of Cambridge* (London, 1791), pp.51-9; and *Modern Madmen; or, the Constitutionals Dissected. By Solomon Searchem, Esq.* (London, 1792), pp.21-50. See Schofield, 'British Politicians and French Arms', p.187 n.16.

¹³² For Burke's wholehearted approval of Arthur Young's pamphlet, see his letter to Young of 5 March 1793, published in Bentham-Edwards (ed.), *Autobiography of Arthur Young*, p.232.

Probably most war crusaders, as the most militant of the conservatives, were connected with the government in one way or another. John Bowles, for instance, was a paid Treasury writer from 1792: he was paid sums of Secret Service money on at least two occasions, he was also made a Commissioner of Bankrupts and, in 1795, he was given one of the five places on the Commission for the sale of Dutch prize ships. By the mid-1790s, when his writing career was at its height, he had abandoned the legal profession.¹³³ Arthur Young, agricultural improver and author of the successful pamphlet, *The Example of France A Warning to Britain* (February 1793), was patronized by Pitt himself: he was made Secretary to the Board of Agriculture.¹³⁴ John Gifford received a Treasury pension and two consecutive police magistracies, and he probably edited the Treasury-funded *True Briton* newspaper as well as the crusading *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine*.¹³⁵ These war crusaders therefore owed certain obligations to the government. They were probably by choice also of a more loyalist and patriotic, sometimes even jingoistic, disposition than was Burke. Nevertheless, they were much more firmly gripped by the ideological aspect of the war than were most loyalists.¹³⁶ They clearly had a great deal of sympathy for Burke's view of the war, one more rigid and less compromising than that of the Pitt administration, and they were perhaps more prepared to criticize the ministry than were most loyalists.

Yet neither were they all simple copyists of Burke. They hated the French Revolution with a passion that could hardly have been manufactured on demand, and which caused them to develop personal emphases in their writings.¹³⁷ They were 'Burke's fellows, not his followers, in the cause'.¹³⁸

¹³³ Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8, vol.229, pt.2, ff.291a, 292a. These list subsidies to Bowles of £15 on 18 July 1792 and £100 on 10 November 1792. F.292a appears to be a duplicate of the 1792 entries on f.291a for which the Treasury Secretary Charles Long was to be the intermediary, rather than a separate list for 1793, as Emily Lorraine de Montluzin has treated them (*The Anti-Jacobins*, p.68 n.2). Nevertheless, Bowles never denied that he was a hireling writer, and it is possible that he was paid on other occasions as well. He also wrote to Henry Dundas in late 1793, reminding the Home Secretary that he had declined the offer of a place under the Police Bill of 1792 and asking for the position of Register in Chancery for the island of Barbados (PRO HO 42/27, ff.836-v.).

¹³⁴ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.115.

¹³⁵ de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins*, p.26.

¹³⁶ See *ibid.*, p.33.

¹³⁷ See Emma Vincent, "'The Real Grounds of the Present War': John Bowles and the French Revolutionary Wars 1792-1802", *History*, 78 (1993), 416-420.

¹³⁸ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.256.

IV

The chief grounds for war in crusading eyes were the doctrines of the French Revolution. 'The French Revolution was necessarily, and not accidentally the cause of the War,' as the *émigré* pamphleteer, Jacques François Mallet du Pan, wrote.¹³⁹ The Revolution was unquestionably a source of great political turmoil and violence within France, but its chief danger lay in the fact that its principles were aimed at a far wider target: their false and abstract ideas of liberty and sovereignty threatened to act as a universal solvent to destroy the long-established habits of civil and religious subordination which formed the strongest ties of society and the very basis of true freedom by enabling the supreme power in a state to maintain itself with the least possible degree of coercion. In promoting resistance to and the subversion of all legitimate authority, French principles invited gross violence and great instability, which necessitated rule by force; they also must be overthrown by force.¹⁴⁰ The export of these principles all over Europe meant that France must be resisted, not just because it was the formal aggressor in the war, but because the Revolution itself, in principle, language and conduct, was hostile towards every other state, government and legal authority and, it seemed, particularly the British government and constitution. It was surely not doubted, Earl Fitzwilliam told the House of Lords in 1794, 'whether the French had made the public profession of doctrines that were inimical to this and every civilized country. Had they not also made direct war on our allies? How could it then be said, that they had not been the provokers as well as the declarers of the war?'¹⁴¹

After it was published in 1797, the war crusaders tended to subscribe to the Abbé Barruel's conspiracy theory of the French Revolution and the wars it produced, a theory which fitted well with Burke's own ideas on the genesis of the Revolution. This was, as Bowles wrote, 'a deep and vast conspiracy against all the ancient institutions of Europe, civil, political, and religious,' focussed on the French

¹³⁹ Jacques François Mallet du Pan, *Considerations on the Nature of the French Revolution; and on the Causes which Prolong its Duration* (Dublin, 1794), p.1.

¹⁴⁰ John Bowles, *A Third Letter to a British Merchant: Containing reflections on the foreign and domestic politics of this country, together with strictures on the conduct of opposition* (2nd edition: London, 1797), pp.11-12, 16; idem., *French Aggression, Proved from Mr. Erskine's 'View of the Causes of the War;'* with *Reflections on the original character of the French Revolution, and on the supposed durability of the French Republic* (2nd edition: London, 1797), pp.103-4; idem., *Two Letters Addressed to a British Merchant, a Short Time Before the Meeting of the New Parliament in 1796* (1795), p.11; Young, *The Example of France*, pp.1-73; John Gifford, *A Letter to the Earl of Lauderdale, Containing Strictures on his Lordship's Letters, to the Peers of Scotland* (London, 1795), pp.3-44.

¹⁴¹ John Bowles, *Farther Reflections Submitted to the Consideration of the Combined Powers* (2nd edition: London, 1794), pp.15, 18; Gifford, *Letter to the Earl of Lauderdale*, p.85; P.H., xxxi, 673, Earl Fitzwilliam, 30 May 1794.

Revolution, but instigated decades earlier by the propagation of Voltaire's infidel philosophy and fed by 'licentious' German writings. Politically, the movement incited sedition, disturbance and rebellion wherever it could against the existing authorities.¹⁴² When the Revolution eventually burst out, the Jacobins were able to spread their false principles much more easily and openly. The French Republic took possession of peoples who accepted the Revolution and declared war on those who did not. Armed force, therefore, was not the first tactic resorted to; before that came the stirring of civil discord, the incitement to insurrection, and the weakening and dissolution of social, religious and moral ties.¹⁴³ The presence of French agents and incendiary literature in Britain before war broke out seemed to prove the existence of the plot, and evidence that it was succeeding was furnished by the British radical addresses to the National Assembly, the outpourings of propaganda from the radical presses, the establishment of radical clubs and societies and the experiment of the British Convention in 1793. Not only were the revolutionary doctrines propagated earnestly by the French, they were also clearly contagious. Thus, when they had once been accepted by some British subjects, they became naturalized (and this the more easily in Britain since they could be seen to derive directly from Lockean principles) and were energetically promoted by native Britons. Only the creation of Loyal Associations across the nation had averted catastrophe.¹⁴⁴ John Gifford later defended ministers for their adherence to neutrality until February 1793, as Burke would not have done, on the grounds that this proved French aggression beyond all question; but others, such as Bowles and Earl Fitzwilliam, rather chided them for their slowness to act against France, although they could not claim Burke's consistency in this, since they had not urged the government to war before its outbreak.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴² Abbé Augustin de Barruel, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du Jacobinisme* (1797); [John Bowles], *Letters of the Ghost of Alfred, Addressed to the Hon. Thomas Erskine, and the Hon. Charles James Fox, on the Occasion of the State Trials at the Close of the Year 1794, and the Beginning of the Year 1795* (London, 1798), p.49; idem., *Reflections on the Political and Moral State of Society at the Close of the Eighteenth Century* (2nd edition: London, 1801), pp.125-7. On Burke's ideas on a Revolution plot, see pp.17ff. above.

¹⁴³ John Bowles, *Dialogues on the Rights of Britons, Between a Farmer, a Sailor, and a Manufacturer* (London, 1792-3), 'Dialogue the Third' (1793), p.21.

¹⁴⁴ [Bowles], *Letters of the Ghost of Alfred*, pp.20, 51-3; idem., *French Aggression*, pp.103-4. John Gifford's, *A Short Address to the Members of the Loyal Associations, on the Present State of Public Affairs* (London, 1798), told the Loyal Associators that they had 'judiciously converted the Stream of Democracy into a Current of Loyalty' (p.10).

¹⁴⁵ *Pax in Bello; or a Few Reflexions on the Prospect of Peace, arising out of Present Circumstances of the War* (London, 1796); John Gifford, *A Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine; Containing Some Strictures on His View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France* (4th edition: London, 1797), pp.18-20, 45-50, 54-5; Bowles, *Reflections...at the Close of the Eighteenth Century*, p.38; *P.H.*, xxxi, 673-4, Earl Fitzwilliam, 30 May 1794.

While it was important that the balance of power should be restored in full in Europe, the chief aim of the war, according to crusaders, must therefore be the universal defeat of these revolutionary principles. Since the doctrines of the Revolution had caused its acts of military aggression, explained Gifford, 'it was not therefore sufficient that we should repel such aggression, that we should drive them out of the territories of our Ally, which they might re-enter whenever they chose, we had a right to expect that they should offer us a security against the renewal of those acts by disclaiming the principles on which they were founded.' Since 'the principles were avowedly the active aggressors...the cause of hostility', they themselves must be combated.¹⁴⁶ This would ensure the adequate defence of the British constitution, along with all other legitimate constitutions, and, crucially, it would entail the downfall of the illegitimate French Revolutionary regime. The existence of a republican government in France, wrote Arthur Young, was 'the establishment of eternal hostility against all real liberty, and consequently that of Britain.' The prevention of the further progress of the revolutionary system would be entirely insufficient, according to Bowles: 'The malady is not of a nature to admit of palliatives, and a relapse will be inevitably fatal.'¹⁴⁷ He himself, despite a cautious rider to the effect that Britain could not insist on any specific form of government in a counter-revolutionized France, was a vociferous advocate of a restored Bourbon monarchy, maintaining that the whole *ancien régime* must be re-established (though it need not return with all its abuses and corruptions), that only a restored monarchy would be capable of holding it all together, and that the monarchy was the form of government best suited to the French people.¹⁴⁸ Other war crusaders also made clear their strong preference for a restored monarchy. Gifford believed that the interest of Europe 'evidently demanded the restoration of the ANCIENT MONARCHY', and Earl Fitzwilliam was confident that 'By the restoration of monarchy, every thing would fall again into its place.'¹⁴⁹ Others, such as Young and Mallet du Pan, concentrated on the need for stable government after the destruction of the

¹⁴⁶ Gifford, *Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine*, pp.84-5, 87; see also Mallet du Pan, *Considerations*, p.2; [J.C. Hubbard], *Jacobinism; A Poem* (London, 1801), pp.v-vi, 6.

¹⁴⁷ Young, *The Example of France*, p.210; John Bowles, 'Postscript to "The Real Grounds of the Present War with France"', in *The Retrospect* (London, 1798), p.80. See also Gifford, *Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine*, pp.87-8; *P.H.*, xxxi, 674-5, Earl Fitzwilliam, 30 May 1794; *ibid.*, xxxii, 607-8, Earl Fitzwilliam, 14 December 1795.

¹⁴⁸ John Bowles, *Objections to the Continuance of the War Examined and Refuted* (London, 1794), pp.71-6; *idem.*, *Farther Reflections*, pp.23-4, 31-3, 39, 43, 62[F]; *idem.*, 'Postscript to "The Real Grounds"', in *The Retrospect*, pp.80-3.

¹⁴⁹ Gifford, *Letter to the Earl of Lauderdale*, pp.171-2; *P.H.*, xxxi, 675, Earl Fitzwilliam, 30 May 1794.

Revolution, and refused to commit themselves wholeheartedly to any particular form.¹⁵⁰

To the war crusaders, then, this was very much a war of ideology, and it was vital to grasp the true nature of the enemy in order to fight it successfully. The French Revolution, not its military armies, was the primary foe. The Jacobins had transformed their whole degraded nation into 'a camp bristling with bayonets', drunk with induced frenzy and bombast.¹⁵¹ Yet their decrees were more dangerous than the military threat.¹⁵² Bowles struggled titanically to describe the energy of the Revolution and its apparent self-will. Driven by a 'maniacal rage', it was 'like Fire which can only be kept alive by the constant accession of fresh fuel' and, if Britain continued to ignore its real causes, it would be no more in that country's power to resist the Revolution's effects than to combat those of a tornado or earthquake. Even the revolutionary leaders—including Bonaparte himself—had no power to control it. It was a torrent rushing behind them and, 'while they seem to drive, they themselves are driven'.¹⁵³ Jacobinism, moreover, was not less to be feared at home than abroad: 'your internal enemies are many,' wrote one pamphleteer, 'and are more dangerous, because suspected but by few, and hard to be distinguished from friends....you breathe the same air, you dip in one dish, you drink from one cup with traitors'. Just because they had not yet committed such excesses as their French counterparts had did not mean that their intentions ought to be under-rated—they would yet imitate the French Revolution in Britain if they could.¹⁵⁴

Uniquely, this was a war of extermination—either the French monster of anarchy must perish, or all the thrones, governments, society and religion of Europe collapse. War was essential to the very existence of Jacobinism, and Jacobinism could fight with weapons unknown to ordinary warfare—the energy of Revolution, the total material and human resources of the French nation, the lack of any ordinary restraint or scruple.¹⁵⁵ In 1798 Gifford published a pamphlet entitled *A Short Address to the Members of the Loyal Associations, on the Present State of Public*

¹⁵⁰ Young, *The Example of France*, p.40; Mallet du Pan, *Considerations*, pp.69-72.

¹⁵¹ Jacques François Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe* (London, 1794), p.12, 51-4. See also Young, *National Danger*, pp.6-7.

¹⁵² Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, pp.1-2.

¹⁵³ Bowles, *The Real Grounds of the Present War with France* (2nd edition: London, 1793), p. 70; idem., *A Third Letter to a British Merchant*, pp.8, 53; idem., *Farther Reflections*, p.9; idem., *Reflections...at the Close of the Eighteenth Century*, pp.107-8; idem., *Reflections on the Political State of Society at the Commencement of the Year 1800* (London, 1800), pp.95-7.

¹⁵⁴ *The Voice of Truth to the People of England, of all Ranks and Descriptions, on Occasion of Lord Malmesbury's Return from Lisle* (London, 1797), pp.7, 18-39.

¹⁵⁵ Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, pp.2-3; A-JR, i (July 1798), 120; idem., *Considerations*, pp.2, 17-43; Young, *An Idea of the Present State of France*, pp.1-11.

Affairs, which described a conservative's nightmare vision of Jacobin plans for Britain, should revolutionary France triumph in the war, listing the names of well-known radicals (Paine, Horne Tooke, Thelwall, Hardy, Muir, and so on) as members of the Directories to be formed for England, Scotland and Ireland, and the various measures they would carry through, such as the dispersal of the British navy between France, Holland and Spain, leaving only a few ships each to England, Scotland and Ireland.¹⁵⁶

Crusaders advocated many of the same strategies for conducting the war against France and against British radicals as the loyalists did, but, because they were adamant that the revolutionary government must be overthrown, they also insisted upon an allied military attack within France itself. They demanded wholehearted, if not total, warfare from Britain and the allies, since it was a battle for existence itself: 'if nothing but old plans are pursued on one side, while the other is actuated by unheard-of principles and exertions, the event may be easily conjectured,' warned Arthur Young; it was like holding up a feather to a whirlwind. 'It looks like playing with a revolution which threatens to overturn every thing, to swallow up every thing, which makes no secret of its views, and which every day acquires new means to realize them,' Mallet du Pan wrote.¹⁵⁷ It was therefore necessary to attack the Jacobins within France itself. 'The Anarchical Monster must be pierced in his vitals, or he will never be destroyed,' declared Bowles. This was just and necessary, for France interfered within other countries and their governments, and this was the only effective and permanent way to guard against it.¹⁵⁸ Colonial expeditions simply wasted troops which could be used more effectively at the heart of the matter.¹⁵⁹ Full support for and use of the French counter-revolutionary forces were urged, for the crusaders believed that their need for allied help was mutual. There was no rational prospect that France could be reduced to order without the efforts of the French people themselves. Bowles thought that the vast majority of the French population was impatient to be rescued from the crippling yoke of the Revolution; once given courage by allied support,

¹⁵⁶ Gifford, *A Short Address to the Members of the Loyal Associations*, pp.17-39.

¹⁵⁷ Young, *An Idea of the Present State of France*, pp.39, 32; Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, pp.8-9. See also *The Voice of Truth*, pp.4, 6, 10-11; John Bowles, *Reflections Submitted to the Consideration of the Combined Powers* (London, 1794), p.2.

¹⁵⁸ Bowles, *Farther Reflections*, p.45; *P.H.*, xxxi, 674, Earl Fitzwilliam, 30 May 1794; Bowles, *Objections to the Continuance of the War*, pp.64-6; *idem.*, *Reflections...at the Close of the Eighteenth Century*, p.16; *idem.*, *French Aggression*, p.69; Gifford, *Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine*, pp.83-8; Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, pp.54-5, 69-75.

¹⁵⁹ John Gifford, *A Second Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine* (London, 1797), p.50; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 591, Dr. French Laurence, 18 May 1797—Laurence was in fact here arguing for the retention of British troops on St. Domingo, but rather because he did not wish Britain to appear weak, having committed troops there in the first place, a policy of which he disapproved.

they would rush forth to break their chains.¹⁶⁰ The Combined Powers ought therefore to declare their views and intentions with regard to the counter-revolution in France, and then to follow this up with decisive military action. They must recognize Louis XVII (and later, his uncle, Louis XVIII) as the hereditary King of France. The clergy and nobility must also be protected and helped, since they were essential to any restoration of the old system in France, both in terms of their places in the social structure and, in the case of the clergy particularly, of their value in restoring a sense of morality to the country.¹⁶¹ Mallet du Pan, as befitted a Franco-Swiss *émigré*, was more aware of the potential difficulties of this policy than most—the fears which would grip the French population of allied plundering and of the return of the abuses of the *ancien régime*—but he was certain that it was the only way to defeat the Revolution.¹⁶² The allied powers must also learn to follow up their victories properly, especially those achieved on French territory, for they were too prone to lose their advantages through failing to reinforce and press on quickly enough.¹⁶³

Crusaders were, then, more prepared to differ from ministerial policy than were loyalists, because of their strong conviction that there was only one strategy capable of defeating revolutionary France. They treated the government's failures somewhat more gently, however, than did Burke. They were willing to allow that, if this was a just and necessary war, ministers were not ultimately responsible for its success, and they were as much concerned to defend them against Opposition accusations than they were to press their own criticisms.¹⁶⁴

The characteristic by which war crusaders could most easily be distinguished was that of their attitude to peace negotiations. Again, the crusaders used many of the arguments rehearsed by ministers and loyalists against peace, but loyalists were almost always relieved when ministers attempted to treat with the French government and defended them for doing so. Crusaders' reactions to negotiations with revolutionary France always ranged from disapproval to horror. To them, the grounds of war—which were to do with the survival of society and civilization rather than with the usual petty causes of irritation—still held, and so it was

¹⁶⁰ Bowles, *Reflections Submitted to the Combined Powers*, p.20; also Young, *An Idea of the Present State of France*, pp.39-42; Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, pp.56-8.

¹⁶¹ Bowles, *Reflections Submitted to the Combined Powers*, pp.14-20, 22-33; *idem.*, *Farther Reflections*, pp.41, 44-5.

¹⁶² Mallet du Pan, *Considerations*, pp.46-9, 66-9.

¹⁶³ *Idem.*, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, pp.29-47, 59-64; Young, *An Idea of the Present State of France*, pp.37-8.

¹⁶⁴ *The Voice of Truth*, pp.42-7; Gifford, *Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine*, pp.63-5; A-JR, iv (December 1799), 487-8.

appalling to contemplate an abandonment of the struggle. Jacobinism was still a threat; by the later 1790s, it might have lost many of its adherents, but many others were incurable, and every country in Europe was plagued with those who were infected and those who were its dupes. It had had an amazingly successful ten years by the turn of the century, having overthrown half the governments of Europe, and it had no reason to be discouraged. The fall of Robespierre did not herald the dawn of 'moderation' in the Republic, or anything like it—the methods of different French revolutionary governments might change, but their object remained constant.¹⁶⁵ It ought to be unthinkable for Britain to recognize the French Republic:

Though we cannot controul the course of events, nor direct the chances of war, yet I cannot foresee any situation to which we can possibly be reduced, so disastrous as to extort from us an acknowledgement of the French republic; an acknowledgement pregnant with such infinite danger as almost to amount to a political suicide.¹⁶⁶

To negotiate with it would hardly be possible, since it operated on such entirely different principles from the British constitution, and the attempt would be disgraceful, since France was the original aggressor. Exhaustion was no reason to give up, for it would produce only 'imperious sovereignty on one side, and disgraceful submission on the other'. For war crusaders, this must be a war to the death.¹⁶⁷

Despite these views, most war crusaders—Earl Fitzwilliam being a reliable exception—were at least more willing to contemplate the possibility of peace than Burke had been, because of their greater concern to defend the ministry. Bowles argued that ministers were entitled to the plea of necessity in their decisions at various times to offer to negotiate, since public opinion was so heavily in favour of such action. In his *Reflections at the Conclusion of the War* (1801), he urged the proper use of the defences of the country during peace-time, trying to reconcile the crusading instincts which warned him that a mere military peace with the revolutionary Republic would be no true peace, with his loyalty to the ministry

¹⁶⁵ Bowles, *Reflections...at the Close of the Eighteenth Century*, p.17; idem., *Reflections at the Conclusion of the War* (London, 1801), pp.60-7; Gifford, *Letter to the Earl of Lauderdale*, pp.169-171; idem., *A Short Address, to the Members of the Loyal Associations*, p.16; *P.H.*, xxxii, 1179-81, 1185-9, Earl Fitzwilliam, 6 October 1796; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 865-7, 884, Earl Fitzwilliam, 2 November 1797; Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, p.2; Young, *An Idea of the Present State of France*, pp.18-21, 25-31; idem., *National Danger*, p.2; *The Voice of Truth*, pp.70-3.

¹⁶⁶ Gifford, *Letter to the Earl of Lauderdale*, p.171. Also Young, *An Idea of the Present State of France*, p.47.

¹⁶⁷ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 864-5, Earl Fitzwilliam, 2 November 1797; Bowles, *Two Letters to a British Merchant*, pp.6-7; Young, *An Idea of the Present State of France*, p.48. See also *P.H.*, xxxiii, 881, Earl Fitzwilliam, 2 November 1797.

which was in the process of concluding the terms of peace. In like manner, John Gifford advised the retention of the Alien Bill during peacetime, and its vigorous enforcement.¹⁶⁸

As for the eventual settlement of 1801-2, Bowles declared that the ministers had done very well in embarrassing circumstances; but he was little satisfied with the so-called peace in prospect. Rejoicing over the two islands which Britain had been permitted to keep was like a man rejoicing that he had saved a few days' provisions from a fire which was threatening to burn down his home, for however honourable Britain's own terms, the balance of power in Europe had been virtually surrendered. Worse still, the peace had left the French monarchy overthrown.¹⁶⁹ Dr. Laurence was less amenable still, and told ministers that they had laid themselves open to 'the most serious charge of misconduct' and that the treaty was 'most fatal to the country'.¹⁷⁰

Geoffrey Carnall has suggested that 'What other people were haunted by as an occasional bad dream, was for [Burke] a habitual nightmare',¹⁷¹ and this is perhaps a helpful spectrum on which to see British loyalists and crusaders in the 1790s. Very few people, if any, were driven to the same state of desperation by the French Revolution as Burke was, and consequently few viewed the war with the same inflexibility. Some of those who knew him well, such as Earl Fitzwilliam and Dr. Laurence, probably came closest to him in unrelenting crusading opinions. Bowles, Gifford, Young and other crusading pamphleteers had greater obligations to defend the ministry's conduct of the war, and probably greater loyalist sympathies of their own, but they also suffered from the nightmare of a world revolutionized by Jacobinism badly enough to diverge clearly from the ministerial line in their views of the aims and nature of the conflict, their ideas of how it should be waged and their attitudes towards peace. Loyalists, too, were captured by horrible visions, though of a slightly different nature. Their nightmare was less of a world or even a Europe revolutionized and more of a Britain in thrall to radical politicians and levelling economists. A French invasion was a variation on this theme which occurred with

¹⁶⁸ Gifford, *Letter to the Hon. Thomas Erskine*, p.103; Bowles, Article I, A-JR, i (August 1798), 134; idem., *Reflections at the Conclusion of the War*, pp.43, 46, 58; Gifford, *Second Letter to Thomas Erskine*, p.39.

¹⁶⁹ Bowles, *Reflections at the Conclusion of the War*, pp.5, 7-8, 35-7, 43.

¹⁷⁰ P.H., xxxvi, 145, Dr. Laurence, 3 November 1801; ibid., xxxvi, 674, Dr. Laurence, 12 May 1802; also ibid., xxxvi, 806-7, Dr. Laurence, 14 May 1802. For William Cobbett's strong disapproval of the peace settlement, see A.M. Broadley (ed.), *The Journal of a British Chaplain in Paris During the Peace Negotiations of 1801-2. From the unpublished MS. of the Revd. Dawson Warren, M.A., unofficially attached to the Diplomatic Mission of Mr. Francis James Jackson* (London, 1913), p.xxxii.

¹⁷¹ Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age: The Development of a Conservative Mind* (Oxford, 1960), p.9.

increasing frequency as the threat from domestic radicalism diminished, but this was a dream which could be banished by the prospect of peace. The visions of crusaders could only be intensified by such a prospect.

4. The Opposition to the War (I): The Foxite Whigs

Opposition to the British government's war against revolutionary France fluctuated, as different groups at different times found it in their interests to be counted part of it or not. The conflict was actively opposed in a consistent way for three main reasons: party politics, political idealism and pacifism. These motivations might overlap in the anti-war reasoning of any individual or group of people, but, while Foxite Whigs inside Parliament and their sympathizers outside it tended to be motivated by party political opposition to the conflict, the arguments of radical politicians were dominated by their desire for 'French principles' to be permitted to spread unhindered, and the liberal 'Friends of Peace' emphasized the evil nature and consequences of war. This chapter and the next will examine the views of these three groups of anti-war activists, leaving the consideration of the more sporadic demonstrations of popular opposition to the conflict to chapter 8.

By their attitudes to the secession of the Portland Whigs in 1794, to the French Revolution in general, and to the aims, conduct and cessation of the war, the Foxites showed themselves to be more concerned to defeat Pitt than to preserve peace with France. This rather factious party spirit laid them open to charges of inconsistency when they sometimes tried to argue from principle and whenever the government began to negotiate for peace. This chapter examines the opinions of the Foxite Whigs in Parliament and their supporters out-of-doors. It begins, however, by considering those former allies of Fox, the Portland Whigs, and their journey from parliamentary opposition to membership of the government because of their support for the war against revolutionary France.

I

The rapidly changing events during the war against France made choices more difficult for the Opposition Whigs as well as for the ministry and, if the government was unclear in its war aims, the Opposition of 1792-4 was clearly divided in its attitudes to the war itself. Because of its direct impact upon Britain, the conflict forced a polarization of political attitudes even more sharply than had the Revolution. It had become a matter of national security and was no longer merely an issue of personal opinion or sympathy. Fence-sitting was not an option for Opposition or independent MPs; Jacobin and royalist excesses in France often appeared to be equally horrifying, but ultimately a choice had to be made. The problem was complicated for the Whig Opposition in Parliament by the decision

they had to make over the relative importance of the existence of a parliamentary opposition and the issue of national security. For some, such as Charles James Fox, the existence of an opposition in Parliament to the Pitt administration was of such fundamental importance that it helped to shape their views on the war. For others, the war and national security came first, and they eventually made the difficult choice of leaving the opposition benches to support the government.

Fox could not bear the idea of 'suspending opposition for the purpose of giving strength to Government', even during a war, particularly since the government was led by William Pitt, who had been used by George III to overthrow the Fox-North coalition of 1782-3.¹ A considerable number of those who remained with him did so partly because of their eagerness for parliamentary reform—younger men, such as Charles Grey and Samuel Whitbread—while their less radical elders continued in opposition for much the same reasons as Fox, having been with him in Parliament through the struggle for office of 1782-4. Less enthusiastic for parliamentary reform they may have been (William Adam opposed Grey's motion calling for it in May 1793), but their hostility towards British or allied interference in French affairs inexorably led them to condone French republicanism. This, and not mere military security alone, was at the heart of the split with those who later became known as 'the Portland Whigs'.²

These MPs, who at various stages between 1791 and 1794 abandoned their support of Fox and eventually came to support Pitt, saw the menace to the welfare of Britain in the 1790s as an essentially different entity to the danger posed by the influence of the crown in the 1780s. The major enemy then had been the influence of the Court on British political life, through the King's placing of the young, inexperienced William Pitt at the head of the government. Now, it seemed to these Opposition MPs, a greater foe threatened, in the shape of revolutionary principles armed by Frenchmen and welcomed by British radicals. In the face of these it was not only prudent, but necessary, to cease fighting the lesser antagonist and to join forces against the common enemy. To Fox and his friends, on the other hand, the British war against France was not a struggle against any serious threat, but merely another symptom of corruption in high places, which remained the real foe. The Duke of Portland and various other erstwhile allies of Fox therefore had increasingly less in common with him as the war began to dominate political debate in Parliament and in the nation at large.

¹ BL. Add. MS 47565 f.163, Fox to Adair, 29 November 1792.

² Frank O'Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution* (London, 1967), pp.129-30, 145.

In August 1791 Burke published *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, condemning the 'new Whig' principles of Fox, Sheridan and their followers and vindicating the 'old Whig' principles of those who thought as he did about the Revolution and its excesses. He admitted to his son that in this pamphlet he had represented the whole of the opposition party as approving of the French Revolution precisely in order to 'get the better of their inactivity, & to stimulate them to a publick declaration of, what every one of their acquaintance privately knows, to be as much their Sentiments as they are yours & mine.'³ Pitt reinforced Burke's strategy, declaring in Parliament that in the matter of 'fundamental principles', he was in complete agreement with Burke.⁴

While conservative Opposition Whigs were attempting to persuade Fox of the dangers of the French Revolution, the younger members of the party were trying to gain his sanction for their support for its principles. In April 1792 they formed the Association of the Friends of the People with the object of campaigning for parliamentary reform in Britain.⁵ Fox did not join the society, but, on the other hand, neither did he disown it. This caused the conservative Whigs great concern. 'I am very sorry to see that Fox has taken a part in their support, although he has not signed the Association; but he might just as well have signed it as made the speech he did yesterday,' Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote to his wife on 1 May.⁶ By December Fox was simultaneously a member of the committee of the Loyal Association of St. George's parish of Westminster and a member of the Society of the Friends of the Liberty of the Press.⁷ Nevertheless, conservative Opposition Whigs such as Portland and Earl Fitzwilliam continued to hope that the increasing violence of events in France would shock Fox into agreeing with their perspective on the Revolution.⁸

³ Burke to Richard Burke, 5 August 1791, *Burke Corr.*, vi, 316-7; *P.H.*, xxix, 385, Burke, 6 May 1791; L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party 1782-1794* (Oxford, 1971), p.169; O'Brien, *The Great Melody*, pp.463-4, 501.

⁴ *P.H.*, xxviii, 372-3, Pitt, 9 February 1790. For the Foxite view that Pitt had deliberately opposed the French Revolution in order to split the Whigs, see, for example, James Maitland, 8th Earl of Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland* (London, 1794), pp.131, 172-215; the *Morning Chronicle*, 28 September 1793; L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox* (Oxford, 1992), p.123. For Pitt's manoeuvring, see Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, ch.6, esp. pp.184-193.

⁵ For its founding declaration, membership and address to the British people, see *P.H.*, xxix, 1303-9n.

⁶ Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 17-18, Elliot to his wife, 1 May 1792; *P.H.*, xxix, 1312, Fox, 30 April 1792; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p.120. See also *Malmesbury Diaries and Letters*, ii, 454, 9 June 1792.

⁷ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.16; Mitchell, *The Disintegration of the Whig Party*, pp.206-7.

⁸ O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, p.101. See BL Add. MSS 45728 ff.136v-7, Auckland to Lord Sheffield, 24 July 1792, for the musings and hopes of an establishment figure on the possibility that Fox might be persuaded to join the government.

That perspective was not yet clearly defined, an indecision in which the conservative Whigs were hardly unique. While Thomas Grenville and Fitzwilliam wanted to suspend systematic parliamentary opposition, but were not convinced that Britain ought to prepare for war against France, Windham agreed with Burke that the country should be made ready to defend itself and even perhaps to assist the Combined Powers on the Continent. Portland himself was prepared to sympathize with the Austro-Prussian invasion of France, but it was unclear what he thought about a possible British intervention in the European turmoil.⁹

By December 1792 they were sufficiently alarmed by the political turmoil outside Parliament to agree, at least tacitly, with the ministry's calling out of the militia and summoning Parliament.¹⁰ In the debate on the Address of Thanks to the King, on 13 December, Windham defended the right of a nation to interfere in another's internal affairs if its own interests were affected. Viscount Stormont went further and declared his support for the government for the purposes of resisting French principles. 'I cannot shrink from, or elude that duty [of defending the British constitution], by saying to myself, "I do not like these ministers; I wish the administration was in different, and, as I may think, in abler hands",' he told the House of Lords. 'It is not this or that minister, this or that denomination of men, that I join upon occasions like this. I range myself under the broad banner of the constitution.' Lord Fielding followed suit in the Commons. On 31 December Sir Peter Burrell and the Marquis of Titchfield (Portland's son) supported the ministry in the Commons debate on the Army Estimates.¹¹ Lord Loughborough accepted the seals of office of the Lord Chancellorship on 18 January 1793 and, after the declaration of war in February, Windham and perhaps 25 other Whigs joined some independent MPs to form a 'Third Party' to support the government in its conflict against France, while reserving their judgement on other matters and on the actual conduct of the war.¹²

These MPs appeared to hope that they differed with the Foxites only on the war and that this might soon be resolved. They found themselves on the horns of a dilemma, unable in their position to defend the government's strategy or to attack its

⁹ *P.H.*, xxx, 51, Thomas Grenville, 13 December 1792; O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, pp.108-9.

¹⁰ Windham was closely involved with the formation of the Loyal Association at the Crown and Anchor in November 1792 (Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.232 n.1). See also *P.H.*, xxx, 36-7, 540-2, Windham, 13 December 1792, on repressive measures against British radicalism.

¹¹ *P.H.*, xxx, 39-40, Windham, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxix, 1572-3, Viscount Stormont, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 9-10, Lord Fielding, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 191, Burrell and Titchfield, 31 December 1792. Later in the debate (col. 213), indeed, Titchfield declared that the ministry ought to have acted sooner.

¹² O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, pp.117, 126-8; Mitchell, *The Disintegration of the Whig Party*, p.214.

conduct of the war. Some, however, such as Sir Gilbert Elliot and Lord Malmesbury, had recognized even before the outbreak of war that to remain in awkward opposition could only be a temporary solution and that it would be necessary to break with Fox completely and give formal support to the government, because the issues surrounding the war had become 'truly the just criterion of public conduct and connection'.¹³ Elliot unhooked himself in April 1793, declaring himself at the service of the ministry, and was eventually appointed the British Commissioner at Toulon in September of that year, after some negotiation and manoeuvring. 'Is it not childish,' he asked, 'to be finding fault with the mode of carrying on the war at the very time when we refuse to assist in doing it better?'¹⁴ Malmesbury likewise accepted a diplomatic mission to Berlin in November 1793.

Portland and his followers took longer to overcome their deep-seated distrust of Pitt, which, like Fox's, dated from the events of 1782-4, and had been reinforced by their objections to his conduct of the war. They agreed with Burke that the government's strategy was not nearly close enough to a consciously counter-revolutionary line, and they were also unwilling to admit that the difference between them and the Foxites was one of principle and more than one of interpretation. They rarely spoke in Parliament, supporting neither Pitt nor Fox.¹⁵ Meanwhile, the war did not end conveniently after one campaign and, in January 1794, Portland and his followers opted to follow the 'Third Party' formula of separation from Fox and systematic opposition, granting their support for the war, but no systematic support for the administration. They were involved in the Volunteer movement from the spring of 1794; but it was not until July, after lengthy talks and various concessions, that they were finally persuaded to overcome their dislike of Pitt and their objections to his war strategy sufficiently to join the administration, having decided that the ministry required to be stiffened by their greater resolve against revolutionary principles and activities.¹⁶ 'If We decline taking our share of responsibility in the

¹³ *P.H.*, xxx, 160, Earl Spencer, 22 December 1792 is a typical apologia for a Whig now voting with the government on the war. Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 103, Elliot to Sir David Carnegie, January 1793; *Malmesbury Diaries and Letters*, ii, 499-500, Lord Malmesbury to the Duke of Portland, 16 January 1793.

¹⁴ O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, pp.152-3, 176; Paul Kelly, 'Strategy and Counter-Revolution: the journal of Sir Gilbert Elliot, 1-22 September 1793', in *English Historical Review*, xcvi (1983), 330; Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 150-2, 157-9, Elliot to his wife, 17 September 1793 (quotation from p.159).

¹⁵ On both the Portland Whigs' distrust of Pitt and their reluctance to admit substantial divergence from Fox, see *LCGIII*, i, 650-2, the Duke of Portland to the Prince of Wales, 21 January 1793. On their careful support in Parliament for the war but not for the administration, see *P.H.*, xxx, 413-4, the Duke of Portland, 12 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1245-7, Windham, 21 January 1794—and see also *Malmesbury Diaries and Letters*, ii, 508, 8 November 1793, on Portland; BL Add. MSS 47569 ff.30-1, Thomas Grenville to Fox, 29 December 1793; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p.133.

¹⁶ O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, pp.178, 186, 192.

present moments the danger with which this Country and all the Civilised World are threatened must be unavoidable and greatly increased,' wrote Portland.¹⁷ In the reconstructed administration Portland himself became Home Secretary, Windham joined the War Office, Fitzwilliam became Lord President of the Board of Trade, Lord Spencer took up the Privy Seal and Lord Mansfield was made a Cabinet Minister without portfolio. Various other marks of favour and patronage were also conferred on the Portland Whigs and, with regard to policy, Portland received assurances that the British government aimed at the restoration of the French monarchy.¹⁸

II

The seceders were regretted rather than condemned by Fox. He wearily told his nephew, Lord Holland, that he would prefer to retire from politics altogether, but that 'this could not be done, and there therefore remains nothing but to get together the remains of our party, and begin, like Sisyphus, to roll up the stone again, which long before it reaches the summit, may probably roll down again.' Some of his remaining followers were less forgiving, and angrily denounced the Portland Whigs.¹⁹ The traffic within Parliament, however, though hardly equal, was by no means one-way. The Foxite party also received support in opposition from a few former Pittites who were hostile to the war, such as William Smith, who was a member of the Friends of the People and who had been instrumental in arranging Pitt's talks with Maret in December 1792.²⁰ The Marquis of Lansdowne, not previously an admirer of Fox, fell out with Pitt over his non-inclusion in the Cabinet and opposed him over the war, and by late 1792 he and his son, the Earl of Wycombe, had decided to throw in their lot with Fox. Lord Holland, who reported this, also thought that Earl Fitzwilliam was a gain of doubtful value to Pitt because,

¹⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p.196.

¹⁸ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.414; O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, p.196.

¹⁹ Lord John Russell (ed.), *Memorials and Correspondence of Charles James Fox* (4 vols.: London, 1853-7), iii, 65-6, Fox to Lord Holland, 9 March 1794. See also BL Add. MSS 47569 ff.56v.-7, Fox to ?, 2 January 1795. For examples of Foxite anger towards the secessions, see the anonymous open letter to Loughborough, published as *A Letter to the Greatest Hypocrite in His Majesty's Dominions* (1794); also *P.H.*, xxx, 1240-1, Sheridan, 21 January 1794.

²⁰ Richard W. Davis, *Dissent in Politics 1780-1830. The Political Life of William Smith, M.P.* (London, 1971), pp.51-102; Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', p.264. O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, pp.253-4, lists other MPs who were not recognized to be associated with Fox but who often voted with him during the 1790s. See also the anonymous pamphlet headed *Reasons Against Refusing to Negotiate with France. By an Approver of the Measures of Administration, During the Former Periods of the War* (London, 1800)—whether or not this title was merely a rhetorical device, war-weariness surely provoked widespread discontent with the Pitt administration.

although after his breach with the rest of the Cabinet over Ireland in March 1795 he continued to support the war and oppose reform, he also assisted the Opposition with his hostility to the government's Irish policy, the expansion of the militia and on the conduct of the war.²¹ The Duke of Grafton, William Wilberforce and Henry Duncombe all opposed the government at various times on the issue of the war. Moreover, though Fox might restrain himself in public over the issue of the split, he was now free to express himself on the war without the restraint of moderation previously required to retain the support of the Portland group.²²

The Foxite rump was a relatively small group of MPs—Frank O’Gorman estimates it at some 66 MPs, less than half of the old opposition group, and L.G. Mitchell describes it as ‘no longer an opposition but a pressure group’. Fox realized in 1794 that, even so, all was ‘not quite in harmony’ within it and that increased party spirit would have to be fostered through the experience of the split with the Portland Whigs.²³ John Ehrman notes that it had been only over the past decade that organized and consistent opposition to government was becoming recognized as legitimate, by way of the turmoil of 1782-4 and the Dissenting campaign of 1790 for the repeal of the Test Acts. If this is so, it may be that opposition to the British war against revolutionary France was a significant factor in the formation and consolidation of the institution of a party of opposition in Parliament. In his attitudes to the French Revolution, and to the aims and conduct of the war, Fox led his followers in a campaign marked still more by hostility to ministers than by opposition to the conflict itself. ‘This war must grow to be disliked by all classes of people, as much, or more than the American war,’ he wrote in October 1794, ‘and we may profit, as a party, by such an opinion becoming prevalent.’²⁴

Many of the Foxite Whigs were inclined to support the French, partly because of personal connections with France. Fox himself had visited Paris several times, and he had links with many of the leading members of French society who had come over to England at the end of the American War, and particularly with those liberal noblemen who were involved in the early stages of the Revolution, such as the Vicomte de Noailles, vice-president of the National Assembly in 1789, and the Marquis de Lafayette. His supporters also had links with the envoy of the

²¹ Henry Richard, Lord Holland, *Memoirs of the Whig Party During My Time* (2 vols.: London, 1852), i, 43-4, 75-6; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p.137.

²² Mitchell, *The Disintegration of the Whig Party*, pp.227-30; Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 18, Elliot to his wife, 1 May 1792.

²³ O’Gorman, *The Whig Party*, pp.129, 253; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p.141; Russell (ed.), *Memorials and Correspondence*, iii, 66, Fox to Holland, 9 March 1794.

²⁴ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.54-6; Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 89, Fox to Holland, 5 October 1794.

National Convention in London, M. Chauvelin, in 1792-3—Sheridan visited him twice in Portman Square to explain Foxite views to him.²⁵

Fox was enchanted with the Revolution in its initial stages. He responded to it more emotionally and less intellectually than Burke did, joyfully welcoming its acclamation of freedom and its condemnation of despotism. He associated the events of the Revolution in France with those of the Glorious Revolution in England a century earlier, with the American Revolution and (if not explicitly) with the Whig struggle of 1782-4, seeing only its attack on despotism and corrupt Courts and not its tendency towards an unstable democracy.²⁶ He continued to support the more moderate Girondin party when the Jacobin violence which so dismayed him was propelled into the ascendancy in Paris.

Before the outbreak of the British war with France, therefore, the Foxite Whigs and their supporters defended the Revolution not only within France but also with regard to its international consequences. They argued that France was anxious to preserve peace with Britain and that it was in too great a state of turmoil to be in a position to harm its powerful rival. It invaded only the territories of its declared enemies.²⁷ The Foxites regretted the Austro-Prussian war of 1792 against France, and sympathized with France. Although they were shocked by the events of August and September in France, they were delighted by the retreat of the Duke of Brunswick and the Prussian army.²⁸ Fox wrote to Lord Holland that 'no public event not excepting Saratoga & York Town, ever happened that ever gave me so much delight. I would not allow myself to believe it for some days for fear of disappointment.'²⁹ In December 1792 Samuel Whitbread urged the administration to recognize the French Republic formally, since not to do so was an unnecessary act of hostility. Fox argued that Britain should have interfered in the conflict to mediate between the belligerents, out of sympathy for the defensive war France was waging.³⁰

²⁵ Mitchell, *The Disintegration of the Whig Party*, pp.154-6, 168; idem., *Charles James Fox*, pp.109-10, 158-9; Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, p.92; Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', p.295.

²⁶ Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, chs. 6, 8.

²⁷ *P.H.*, xxviii, 332-5, 346-8, Fox, 5 February 1790; *ibid.*, xxx, 327, Lauderdale, 1 February 1793; the *Morning Chronicle*, 10 January 1793, on the Spanish treaty of neutrality with France; BL Add. MS 47571 f.23v., Fox to Holland, 23 November 1792.

²⁸ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.226.

²⁹ BL Add. MS 47571 f.17v, Fox to Holland, 12 October 1792. See also *ibid.*, ff.20-v., Fox to Holland, [November 1792].

³⁰ *P.H.*, xxx, 103, Whitbread, 15 December 1792; *ibid.*, 60, Fox, 14 December 1792. Two years earlier, Earl Stanhope had even urged alliance with France—*ibid.*, xxviii, 898, Stanhope, 26 November 1790.

War *against* France was grossly unpalatable to these Whigs, and they declared that it was both unnecessary and undesirable. It was unnecessary because France posed no danger to Britain. French revolutionary opinions had made very little progress in Britain, and French arms were directed elsewhere. Peace with the world was necessary to domestic tranquillity, and the extent of radical opinion would only be inflamed by war. Moreover, war might accelerate the circumstance which ministers were apparently so eager to prevent: the aggrandizement of France, and at British expense.³¹ As for the question of Dutch security, the Whigs were scornful that the French breach of the Scheldt should constitute a serious ground for war. Protection of their river was a Dutch affair: the British alliance could not be expected to stretch to cover such a trivial issue, which would undoubtedly result in a long and arduous conflict. It was in any case not even in the Dutch interest to go to war for such a cause, and Britain ought not to force them into it.³² Erskine reminded the Commons of the horrors of warfare for the soldiers involved—the disease, the damp, the lack of fresh provisions—and of the burdensome and unpopular taxation it involved at home.³³ Britain was unprepared for war, according to the *Morning Chronicle*. ‘We see a great deal of that kind of bustle, which gives countenance to jobbing, and none of the alacrity and vigour which indicate war,’ it reported on 21 January 1793.³⁴

It was therefore demanded by the Foxites that Britain should negotiate with France to maintain peace between them. Fox himself proposed a motion to this effect in the Commons on 15 December 1792, and the speeches and writings of his followers after this regularly sought to demonstrate the emptiness of government arguments against such a proceeding—despite the fact that Fox may well have known, through Sheridan’s communications with Chauvelin, that secret negotiations

³¹ *Comments on the Proposed War with France, on the State of Parties, and on the New Act Respecting Aliens* (London, 1793), pp.22, 60-78; *War with France! or, who pays the reckoning? In an Appeal to the People of England! Repentance may come too late!* (London, 1793), p.22; *P.H.*, xxx, 57, Erskine, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 68, Fox, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 220-3, Fox, 31 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 294, the Earl of Wycombe, 1 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 297-8, Whitbread, 1 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 322, Stanhope, 1 February 1793. See also the protests against the war given by the Marquis of Lansdowne, the Earl of Lauderdale and Earl Stanhope to the records of the House of Lords on 1 February 1793 in *P.H.*, xxx, 334-8.

³² *P.H.*, xxx, 11-12, Wycombe, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 25, Fox, 13 December 1792; *P.H.*, xxx, 222, Fox, 31 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 299-300, Whitbread, 1 February 1793; *Comments on the Proposed War with France*, pp.5-12; *War with France!* pp.21-2; the *Morning Chronicle*, 10 January 1793.

³³ *P.H.*, xxx, 97-9, Erskine, 15 December 1792. See also Hervey Redmond Morris, *The Crisis. A Collection of Essays written in the years 1792 and 1793* (London, 1794), pp.53, 77; Charles James Fox, *A Letter from the Right Honourable Charles James Fox, to the Worthy and Independent Electors of the City and Liberty of Westminster* (London, 1793), pp.21-30.

³⁴ See also the *Morning Chronicle*, 9, 11, 16, 18, 19 January and 12 February 1793.

were under way and that it was therefore unnecessary to demand that a British minister should be sent to Paris to negotiate.³⁵ There was an effective pledge for the fulfilment of whatever might be agreed upon in a negotiation, wrote the author of *Comments on the Proposed War with France* (1793), 'because France can have no interest but to get rid of the frightful burthen of her foreign war, and to look to her deranged internal affairs, which will soon fix and fascinate all her regards.' The *Morning Chronicle* agreed that France sought only the friendship of Britain, and censured Grenville's cold treatment of Chauvelin. William Adam argued that, should the negotiation fail, it would at least have convinced the British public of the government's sincerity in going to war only as a last resort. The Marquis of Lansdowne suggested that it might help to save the life of Louis XVI.³⁶

The Foxites did not divide Parliament on the announcement of the outbreak of hostilities, but they continued to argue that the conflict was unnecessary. Lauderdale thought that Britain ought to have welcomed the Revolution in France as the downfall of a government characterized by restless intrigue and love of warfare, and as a development that surely augured well for international commerce.³⁷ They were adamant that the French, harried by German armies and anxious about their domestic state, had not wanted war with Britain and that it could have been avoided by negotiation. Their declaration of hostilities had simply been a pre-emptive strike after clear evidence of British hostility, such as the British refusal to mediate between France and the German powers in June 1792, the recall of Gower from Paris, the violation of the 1786 commercial treaty, the Aliens Act and the expulsion of Chauvelin from London.³⁸ By 1796 Fox had brought the argument full circle to

³⁵ *P.H.*, xxx, 80-1, 125-6, Fox, 15 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 123, Sheridan, 15 December 1792; Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', p.340; Black, *British Foreign Policy*, p.429. Black also comments (p.431) that the repeated calls of the Foxites for negotiations jeopardized the chance of a British envoy being sent to Paris, since this would have had to have been an unofficial mission in order not to upset the other European powers.

³⁶ *Comments on the Proposed War with France*, pp.32-3; the *Morning Chronicle*, 15, 17, 18, 21, 31 January 1793; *P.H.*, xxx, 78, Adam, 14 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 148-9, Lansdowne, 21 December 1792. See also *P.H.*, xxx, 84-5, Grey, 15 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 95-6, Erskine, 15 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 137-8, Sheridan, 20 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 222-3, Fox, 31 December 1792.

³⁷ Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.17-27.

³⁸ For example: Benjamin Vaughan, *Letters, on the Subject of the Concert of Princes, and the Dismemberment of Poland and France, By a Calm Observer* (London, 1793), pp.366-72; *A Letter to the Greatest Hypocrite*, p.14; Horatius Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!! Or the State of France in the Month of August, 1794; in Reply to Montgaillard's State of France: to which are added, Reflections on the Expedience and Necessity of an Immediate Peace with the French Republic* (London, 1794), pp.37-9; James Workman, *An Argument Against Continuing the War* (London, 1795), pp.3-7; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum? The Government; or, the Country?* (5th edition: London, 1796), pp.32-8, 42-51, 55; *The Evidence Summed Up; or a Statement of the Apparent Causes and Objects of the War* (London, 1794), pp.12-26; [Ralph Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters, addressed to a Member of the Present Parliament. Part the First* (London, 1796), pp.10-13;

claim that the lack of allied success in the war proved that its cause must have been 'radically defective'.³⁹

The Foxites' basic rationale for opposing the war was their hostility towards Pitt himself. On 12 December 1792 Fox had declared that 'there was no address at this moment that Pitt could frame, he would not propose an amendment to, and divide the House upon'.⁴⁰ At the same time, the Whigs posed as a high-minded group of men, above such factious party spirit, and only concerned with the welfare of their country. Fox declared in May 1794 that he would do all in his power to persuade the people to demand peace, 'but if a headstrong, rash, ignorant, or haughty minister should plunge us into a war, then we must do the best we could to get out of it; and to keep up our respectability to the rest of the world, supplies must be granted'.⁴¹

If there had been no defensive necessity for Britain to go to war against France, ministers must have had another purpose for it. This notion was built up by some Foxites until it assumed the proportions that the conspiracy theory of the French Revolution beloved of the war crusaders was later to do. The Opposition theory of the war was that it was a despotic crusade waged by the absolute monarchs of Austria and Prussia against the newly-born republic of France, and it was deeply shameful that Britain had aligned itself with the cause of despotism rather than with that of liberty. Benjamin Vaughan, a member of Lansdowne's circle, had provided a detailed description of this autocratic crusade in his *Letters, on the Subject of the Concert of Princes, and the Dismemberment of Poland and France, By a Calm Observer* (1793), which had been published first as a series in the *Morning Chronicle* between 20 July 1792 and 25 June 1793. As early as 25 July 1792 he had asked: 'are they [Austria and Prussia] not acting upon a deep plan, long concerted, and profoundly secret?...a conspiracy (which will eventually become one against the whole human race) is begun, such as was never begun before...a *revolution*, as extraordinary as that of France, is under issue'. Vaughan did not implicate the British government as a full and deliberate member of this conspiracy, but he warned against allowing Britain to become associated with such wickedness, albeit unwittingly.⁴² Fox and his followers, nursing old political grievances against George

War with France! pp.7-18; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.28-36, 41-53; *P.H.*, xxx, 431-2, Fox, 18 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 702, Sheridan, 25 April 1793.

³⁹ *P.H.*, xxxii, 1201, Fox, 6 October 1796.

⁴⁰ *Malmesbury Diaries and Correspondence*, ii, 475, 12 December 1792.

⁴¹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 655, Fox, 30 May 1794.

⁴² Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, p.79. See also his *Two Papers by the Calm Observer, not printed in the collections of his letters extracted from the Morning Chronicle* (London, 1795), re-publishing letters first printed in August and September 1792. For other Foxite denunciations of the

III and anxious to emphasize their credentials as traditional Whigs who were hostile to the corruption of executive power, developed this idea. In it they saw an explanation for the revolutionary violence of August and September 1792: the despots of Europe had harassed the Revolution into perversity. From the beginning of the war they declared that, encouraged by Burke and his writings, Britain had intentionally joined a 'Crusade of Kings', not a war of the people.⁴³

If the Continental coalition were to be successful, the Opposition claimed, the war would destroy the balance of power and civilization in Europe, just as loyalists believed that war was necessary to preserve them. 'I cannot help thinking...of the dreadful state of things in Europe, and the real danger which exists, in my opinion, of the total extinction of liberty, and possibly of civilization too, if this war is to go on upon the principles which are held out,' Fox wrote to Holland in April 1794. Vaughan warned that if the allies defeated France, they would surely savagely plunder it and the rest of Europe, and would become an evil confederate power of gross proportions, a danger to mankind. Another pamphleteer pointed out that an allied victory would result in furious disputes concerning the spoil due to each nation, the jarring interests of indemnification claims, and the discontent and disunity of the French people forced to settle under their conquerors' terms—a clear recipe for a future war.⁴⁴ The Whigs were particularly alarmed by the joining of the tyrannical Turkish Empire to the struggle against France in 1798.⁴⁵

German 'Concert of Princes', see *P.H.*, xxx, 27-8, Fox, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxix, 1574, Stanhope, 13 December 1792; *ibid.*, xxx, 121-3, Sheridan, 15 December 1792; the *Morning Chronicle*, 30 September 1793; 'The Genius of France' in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.98-100; Morris, *The Crisis*, pp.45-84 (but see pp.168-78, where he executes a *volte face* and shows great approval of the allied campaign and its purposes).

⁴³ *Considerations on the French War, in which the Circumstances Leading to it, its Object, and the Resources of Britain for Carrying it on, are Examined, in a Letter, to the Rt. Hon.ble William Pitt, By a British Merchant* (London, 1794), pp.22-4. See also Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, pp.124, 129-30; *P.H.*, xxx, 372-3, Fox, 12 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 428-31, Fox, 18 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1467, Whitbread, 6 March 1794; William Fox, *The Interest of Great Britain, Respecting the Present War* (2nd edition: London, 1793), pp.2-3; Daniel Stuart, *Peace and Reform, Against War and Corruption. In Answer to a Pamphlet, written by Arthur Young, Esq., entitled 'The Example of France, a Warning to Britain'* (2nd edition: London, 1794), pp.116, 56-7; Samuel Waddington, *Remarks on Mr. Burke's Two Letters 'On the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France'* (London, 1796), pp.10, 34; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.26, 69; Thomas Erskine, speech at the trial of John Horne Tooke (1794), in James Ridgway (ed.), *The Speeches of the Hon. Thomas Erskine when at the Bar, on Subjects Connected with the Liberty of the Press, and against Constructive Treasons* (4 vols.: London, 1810), iv, 116-9; *A Retrospect; Illustrating the Necessity of an Immediate Peace with the Republic of France* (Margate, 1796), pp.16-17; the *Morning Chronicle*, 27 December 1796; 'To the Continental Despots' in Bennett, *War Poetry*, p.91.

⁴⁴ Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 72, Fox to Holland, 25 April 1794; Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, pp.190-208, 231-44; *Considerations on the French War*, pp.36-7. See also *P.H.*, xxx, 1470, Whitbread, 6 March 1794; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1366-1373, Fox, 3 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1504, Bedford, 30 December 1796. On the destruction of civilization and 'taste' as a result of such an allied victory, see Lady Holland, quoted in Gerald Newman, 'Anti-French Propaganda and British

The Foxites mocked all government attempts to convince them that there were other and justified reasons for the war. They played hard on the ministers' difficulty in defining the specific objects of the war.⁴⁶ They pressed ministers to admit that the real aim of the British government and its allies was to re-impose the monarchy on the French people, especially after Lord Hood's declaration in favour of Louis XVII at Toulon in September 1793. This was something that the despotic Combined Powers had no right to do and in which Britain, with its long tradition of liberty, ought to have no role.⁴⁷ 'We who banished the race of Stuart, are fighting to restore the race of Capet, we who reformed the national religion and rejected popery, are fighting to continue its abuses!' one pamphleteer wrote.⁴⁸

So eager were Opposition MPs and writers to exonerate France from war-guilt that they seemed to be almost pro-French and disloyal to their own country. Unwilling to change their analysis of the continental war once it appeared likely that Britain would be drawn into it, and seeing an opportunity to heap further opprobrium on all courtly corruption, they presented the British government as an accomplice to the continental villains, in which scenario France clearly emerged as the hero. They publicly condoned those revolutionary excesses which privately caused them real distress.⁴⁹ They accused conservatives of exaggerating the extent of these, and claimed that there were understandable excuses for them. One of the most popular explanations was that the Revolution had unleashed so immense a supply of energy, previously pent-up under absolutist oppression, that it could not immediately be brought under control. It was regrettable, but only natural, that those

Nationalism in the Early Nineteenth Century: Suggestions Toward a General Interpretation', *Victorian Studies*, 18 (1975), 398-9.

⁴⁵ Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 281, Fox to Richard Fitzpatrick, 1798; the *Morning Chronicle*, 27 January 1800.

⁴⁶ *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1520-5, Tierney, 28 February 1800. See also *ibid.*, xxx, 444, Adam, 18 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1022, Fox, 17 June 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1252, Fox, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 663, the Duke of Bedford, 30 May 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1372-5, Fox, 24 March 1795; [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.17-18; Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 34.

⁴⁷ The *Morning Chronicle*, 18, 19, 27 September 1793, 25 July 1797, 20 August 1799; *Considerations on the French War*, pp.27-35; Col. Norman Macleod, *Considerations on False and Real Alarms* (London, 1794), pp.5-9; Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 71-2, Fox to Holland, 25 April 1794.

⁴⁸ *Considerations on the French War*, p.34. See also Charles James Fox, *The Celebrated Speech of the Honourable C.J. Fox, with Proceedings of the Meeting at the Shakespeare Tavern, on Friday, October 10, 1800, Being the Anniversary of his First Election for Westminster* (London, 1800), pp. 11, 17-18; *P.H.*, xxx, 1293, Stanhope, 23 January 1794; the *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1793.

⁴⁹ See BL Add. MSS 47571 ff. 11-19, Fox to Holland, 20 August 1792, 3 September 1792, [September 1792], 12 October 1792, on the abolition of the monarchy and the September massacres in France—he wished the French 'were like our old friends the Americans, & I should scarcely be afraid for them' (f.14, 3 September 1792), and he could see no 'shadow of excuse for this horrid massacre' (f.16v., [September 1792]). See also *P.H.*, xxx, 145-6, Fox, 20 December 1792; the *Morning Chronicle*, 22, 24, 25, 28 and 29 January 1793; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p.124.

who had suffered such inhumanities at the hands of royal despotism should have to vent their fury when it became possible for them so to do.⁵⁰ The execution of Louis XVI was mitigated, it was argued, by the fact that only a minority of Frenchmen had supported it. Britain had deposed or executed various monarchs, such as Mary, Queen of Scots, Charles I and James II, and also various wives of Henry VIII.⁵¹ In any case, the unbearable pressure brought to bear upon the fledgling republic by the hostile armies surrounding it was surely another factor to be taken into account, and the Foxite Whigs thus laid some of the blame for the atrocities at the feet of the continental allies and Britain itself. They also pointed out that the human rights record of the allies, and other nations with which Britain was associated, was by no means clean. French excesses were no justification for Britain to wage war against the Revolution; as one writer asked, 'why are *We* to be punished for *Their* crimes?'⁵²

In their opposition to the war, the Foxites spoke often of the strategic advantages and superior resources they supposed France to possess over those of Britain and its allies. One reason for this, they explained, was the revolutionary state of France, which freed its treasury from dependence on ordinary fiscal limitations and allowed it to wage war with the whole capital of the nation.⁵³ 'What a spectacle of energy does not the Republic of France display at this moment!' enthused the *Morning Chronicle* of 13 September 1793.

The animating cause in which they are engaged has so roused and invigorated their minds, that what they could never accomplish under the reign of Despotism, they now achieve—they shew themselves a match for all the world. Such ever will be the result of a contest for Freedom.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *The Retort Politic on Master Burke; or, a Few Words en Passant: Occasioned by his Two Letters on a Regicide Peace. From a Tyro of his own school, but of another class* (London, 1796), pp.58-9; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* p.29; Waddington, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.19-28; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, p.69; Thomas Erskine, speech at the trial of Thomas Hardy, in Ridgway (ed.), *Speeches of Erskine*, iii, 458.

⁵¹ Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, 311-20.

⁵² *War with France!* p.30. See also BL Add. MSS 47571 ff.42-v., Fox to Holland, 22 August 1793; William Williams, *Rights of the People; or, Reasons for a Regicide Peace* (London, 1796), pp.36-8; Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, pp.3-4, 31-2, 38, 46-7; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, p.39; Thomas Erskine, speech at the trial of John Frost (1793), in Ridgway (ed.), *Speeches of Erskine*, ii, 330-1, 352-3; the *Morning Chronicle*, 1 November 1793; Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, p.355.

⁵³ *Considerations on the French War*, p.43; [William Wilson], *A Dialogue Upon the Two Bills Now Depending in Parliament, Relative to the Rights of the People* (London, 1795), p.32; *P.H.*, xxx, 415, Stanhope, 12 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1228-33, Sheridan, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1287-91, Stanhope, 23 January 1794.

⁵⁴ See also Williams, *Rights of the People*, pp.40-4, 67-8; Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* pp.28-30, 50-5; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1049, Fox, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1292, Stanhope, 23 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1201, Grey, 26 January 1795; the *Morning Chronicle*, 25 September 1793.

On the other hand, Britain's national debt was immense and, while revenue from commerce had been expanding steadily, this had been paralysed by the war, which further drained British funds by the huge loans and subsidies paid to the allies, while ministers continually promised the people that French finances were in such a state of collapse as to make the end of the war imminent. 'Pitt, I really believe, is weak enough to think that the French cannot go on much longer, and they, on the other hand, have but too good grounds for thinking that we cannot,' Fox wrote to Holland in February 1796.⁵⁵

Beyond this, however, the Foxites actually appeared to delight in allied reverses, and to indulge in grim unsurprise at British failures. In part this was due to their obsession with hoping for the fall of the ministry, which might possibly be produced by sufficiently bad military performances. The *Morning Chronicle* reported on 27 September 1793, with more than a hint of suppressed pleasure, that it was more than likely that America would join the war on the French side if it continued into 1794. The *Cambridge Intelligencer* published a 'Translation of the Hymn for the Feast celebrated at Paris on account of the Re-capture of Toulon'. Of the British expedition to Noirmoutier in September 1795, Fox wrote:

Violent as the wish may sound I had much rather hear that they were all cut to pieces than that they gained any considerable success, for in the latter case the war may be prolonged to the utter destruction of both countries and to the total extinction of all principles of liberty and humanity in Europe. I think nothing can show the complete infatuation of our Government so much as this desperate expedition, which I believe as well as hope has not the smallest chance of success.⁵⁶

Furthermore, his enthusiasm for Napoleon was capacious; and, as Frank O'Gorman has remarked, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Fox was really hoping for a French victory over the allies.⁵⁷ Moreover, he and his party did little to allay

⁵⁵ *Considerations on the French War*, pp.48-63; Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 130, Fox to Holland, 18 February 1796. See also Williams, *Rights of the People*, pp.48-60; *The Retort Politic on Master Burke*, pp.32-5; Sir Philip Francis, *The Question as it Stood in March 1798* (2nd edition: London, 1798), pp.20-2; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* pp.7-11; *P.H.*, xxxi, 992, Bedford, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1056-8, Fox, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1301-2, Fox, 5 February 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 166-7, Fox, 29 October 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 735-6, Fox, 15 February 1796; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1468-9, Fox, 30 December 1796; the *Morning Chronicle*, 18 December 1795.

⁵⁶ The *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 18 January 1794, also printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.103-5; BL Add. MS 47572 f.81, Fox to Holland, 10 September 1795; O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, pp.212-3. See also BL Add. MSS 47569 ff.14-v, Fox to Adam, 18 September 1793, on the fall of Dunkirk; and Cecil Price (ed.), *The Letters of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (3 vols.: Oxford, 1966), ii, 77, Sheridan to his wife, 20 September 1797, although here Sheridan professes to 'hate the thought' of 'coming into office'.

⁵⁷ *LCGIII*, iii, p.xiii; O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, p.182.

suspensions of francophilia. Erskine pleaded in vain that 'a man may be a friend to the rights of humanity and to the imprescriptible rights of social man, which is now a term of derision and contempt, that he may feel to the very soul for a nation beset by the sword of despots, and yet be a lover of his own country', for he spoke the words in the defence of a radical politician—an accused traitor—in the treason trials of 1794. Fox, Sheridan, Erskine, Grattan, the Duke of Norfolk, Whitbread, Lord John Russell and Grey were all willing to testify on behalf of Arthur O'Connor at his treason trial in 1798; Fox also supported Gilbert Wakefield and Lord Edward Fitzgerald, put on trial for sedition and treason respectively; the Whig Club was said to sponsor mass rallies and intemperate toasts; and many of them boycotted Parliament from 1797 to 1801, during a time of national crisis. According to Gayle Trusdel Pendleton's survey of English conservative literature in the 1790s, of 714 pamphlets which discussed the Opposition unfavourably, 230 mentioned their associations with France and 507 accused them of using reform as a mask for destroying national institutions. They were 'feared as the most respectable (and therefore potentially successful) vehicle of French principles'.⁵⁸ The King wrote to Pitt in April 1797 about the recent Budget debate in Parliament: 'I think Mr. Fox's attempts to aggravate the difficulties must, if any further proof was necessary, convince every impartial man that from personal pique at me and my Administration he is become an open enemy of his country.'⁵⁹ Fox and his associates did not actually want to see the defeat of their country but, as J.G.A. Pocock has written, they 'spoke as if they expected it—as if the shortcomings of the régime ensured that it would and should fail'.⁶⁰ In their enthusiasm for republican France, moreover, hyperbole sometimes caused them to think the unthinkable: 'Much as I deprecate the idea of a conquest,' wrote William Williams, 'I so entirely differ with Mr. Burke, that I would rather ten thousand times see my country a department of France, than a province of any other nation.'⁶¹

As often as they complained about the evil international consequences of such a despotic crusade as they described this conflict to be, for Britain and for Europe, Opposition writers and MPs tried to score party political points against the government by exposing what they represented as the bad effects of the war upon Britain's internal circumstances. 'Pittism' became a clichéd term of abuse denoting a

⁵⁸ Erskine, speech at the trial of Thomas Hardy (1794), in Ridgway (ed.), *Speeches of Erskine*, iii, 457; Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', pp.296, 302, 477.

⁵⁹ *LCGIII*, ii, 566, George III to Pitt, 27 April 1797.

⁶⁰ J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge, 1985), p.286.

⁶¹ William Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters on the Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory of France* (London, 1796), p.34.

system of misrule dating back to Pitt's entry to power in late 1783. In the present instance, as in the American conflict, the government was charged with 'gambling with its people' in kindling a blaze of deceived popular hysteria for a war they were waging in order to corrupt the liberal British constitution for their own personal gain, rather than for the defence of the nation.⁶² The real domestic object of the war was the extension of the influence of the crown, by the expansion of patronage in new contracts and posts, and this was the reason for their inability to inform the public of the specific object of the conflict.⁶³ It was also the issue which caused the greatest hysteria in the opposition press: 'THE EXCESS OF THIS INFLUENCE IS THE CAUSE!—THE INCREASE OF THIS INFLUENCE IS THE OBJECT OF THE WAR!!!' screamed one pamphlet.⁶⁴

The ministry was charged with robbing the British people of their civil liberties. 'I am convinced that in a very few years this government will become completely absolute, or that confusion will arise of a nature almost as much to be deprecated as despotism itself,' Fox, in depressed mood, told Holland in 1795. 'But why do you not hear complaints?' Sheridan asked ministers in the Commons in 1801. 'You have gagged the people, and bound them hand and foot; and then you say, look how quiet they are.'⁶⁵ The alarms raised in November 1792 had been whipped up on purpose in order to prepare the public mind for repression and war.⁶⁶

⁶² Vaughan, *Letters on the Concerts of Princes*, pp.229-30; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.9, 224-43. See also *The Evidence Summed Up*, pp.3-12; *War with France!* pp.3-5, 22-6; Fox, *The Celebrated Speech...at the Shakespeare Tavern*, pp.8-9; Thomas Bigge, *Considerations on the State of Parties, and the Means of Effecting a Reconciliation Between Them* (2nd edition: London [1790s]), p.18; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.8-11; Thomas Erskine, speech at the trial of James Perry, James Gray and Mr. Lambert (1793), in Ridgway (ed.), *Speeches of Erskine*, ii, 430-2; Workman, *An Argument Against Continuing the War*, p.46; A *Retrospect*, p.8; *Letters from Simkin the Second to his brother Simon, in Wales* (London, 1796), pp.9-14; *P.H.*, xxx, 418, Lauderdale, 12 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1236-9, Sheridan, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1109, J. Courtenay, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1228, T.W. Coke, 26 January 1795; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1060-1, Fox, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1347-8, Fox, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1445, Lansdowne, 30 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxv, 516-7, Sir Francis Burdett, 11 November 1800; the *Morning Chronicle*, 28 September 1793, 10 October 1795.

⁶³ O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* p.52; *P.H.*, xxxi, 957, Fox, 17 June 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1388-9, Fox, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 48, Lauderdale, 5 June 1795; *Some Account of a Very Seditious Book, Lately Found Upon Wimbledon Common, By One of His Majesty's Secretaries of State. With a Commentary, By the Rt. Hon. Gentleman, and Notes by the Editor* (London, 1794); Plowden, *A Friendly and Constitutional Address*, pp.1-2, 6; 'A New Irish Song' and 'A New Song, To Spend All Our Cash in the Wars', both in the British Library Collection of songs and broadsides at 648.c.26.

⁶⁴ *War with France!* p.23.

⁶⁵ *ibid.*, iii, 124-5, Fox to Holland, 15/17 November 1795; *P.H.*, xxxv, 934, Sheridan, 2 February 1801. See also Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, pp.6-9; Plowden, *A Friendly and Constitutional Address*, pp.13-35; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1226-7, Bedford, 28 January 1800; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p.130.

⁶⁶ *P.H.*, xxx, 164-5, Lansdowne, 26 December 1792; Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.14; *Thoughts on a Peace with France; with some observations on Mr. Burke's Two Letters, on Proposals for Peace with the Regicide Directory* (London, 1796), p.6; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, p.19.

In the Traitorous Correspondence Bill of March 1793 ministers infringed the liberty of commerce of British subjects.⁶⁷ Reformers and radicals—or, as Fox put it, ‘those who differ in opinion from [ministers]’—were ‘persecuted’ and put on trial for treason or sedition, and some were transported to Botany Bay.⁶⁸ Habeas corpus was regularly suspended, ‘a most harsh measure’, from 1794 onwards: ‘to secure the constitution, you have violated it,’ wrote one pamphleteer.⁶⁹ The ‘Two Acts’ of 1795, the Treasonable and Seditious Practices Act and the Seditious Meetings Act were passed, according to Fox, in order to silence the public outcry which would otherwise result from the government’s activities.⁷⁰ Complaints were made concerning the loan to Austria made by ministers in 1796 between parliamentary sessions, and therefore without Parliament’s consent.⁷¹ The Opposition did not find the restraint on civil liberties acceptable even during the naval mutinies of 1797.⁷²

In justification of their assertions that the public *angst* of late 1792 had been deliberately promoted by the administration and that the government’s repressive measures throughout the decade were unnecessary and therefore reprehensible, the Foxites maintained that Burke and those who agreed with him were yielding to hysteria and irrationality concerning the extent of the radical threat within Britain.⁷³ Nothing had been proved to support the ministers’ assertions of insurrection and riot in late 1792, claimed Sheridan. Dennis O’Byrne claimed that it was a ‘libel against the people’ to think that there was any considerable number of people who wanted to change the ‘genuine’ British constitution. The public conception of ‘French principles’ had been grotesquely manipulated into the notion that all reformers wanted to level all property and institute economic equality.⁷⁴ Some Opposition

⁶⁷ *P.H.*, xxx, 583-6, Fox, 21 March 1793.

⁶⁸ BL Add. MS 47565 f.45, Fox to Holland, 5 October 1801; *ibid.*, 47571 ff.61-v., Fox to Holland, 17 September 1793; *ibid.*, 47571 ff.97v.-8, Fox to Holland, December 1793; *P.H.*, xxxi, 409, Fox, 17 April 1794.

⁶⁹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 514, Fox, 16 May 1794; *Considerations on the French War*, p.32.

⁷⁰ *LCGIII*, ii, 425-6, the Duke of Portland to the King, 16 November 1795, on the public meeting held by the Whigs to campaign against the Two Acts, at which Fox spoke.

⁷¹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 23 December 1796; *P.H.*, xxxii, 1297-1310, 1346, Fox, 13 December 1796; Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder*, pp.78-85.

⁷² *P.H.*, xxxiii, 812, Smith, 3 June 1797.

⁷³ *Considerations on the French War*, pp.8, 12; ‘Whitehall Alarmed! And a Council Called!’ [1792/3], in the British Library Collection of songs and broadsides at 648.c.26. Sir Brooke Boothby described Burke as parading about ‘in old fashioned gothic armour as the champion of I know not what feudal chivalry...’, in his *Observations on the Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs, and on Mr. Paine’s Rights of Man* (London, 1792), p.80. On the small number and lack of power and influence of genuine republicans in Britain, see also Bigge, *Considerations on the State of Parties*, pp.37-8.

⁷⁴ *P.H.*, xxx, 524-33, Sheridan, 28 February 1793; O’Byrne, *Utrum Horum?* p.64; Bigge, *Considerations on the State of Parties*, pp.25-6, 50; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.15, 20. On the falsity of the 1792 insurrection alarm, see also the *Morning Chronicle*, 23 February 1793 and 9 September 1793 (on the Scottish riots).

writers went so far as to claim that Burke was directly responsible for Britain's entry into the war, while the *Morning Chronicle* quickly blamed the loyalist Association for the Preservation of Liberty and Property.⁷⁵ As for the very few extreme radicals in Britain, the Foxites warned the government that war only encouraged them. 'War is the parent of Discontent, and Discontent is the nurse of Revolution. A continuance of hostilities will produce the times which Mr. Burke describes, and then, as in France, it will be too late to Reform,' warned Daniel Stuart.⁷⁶

Because of the hysterical view they believed ministers to have of the reform movement in Britain, and because of the illiberal use they claimed ministers to be making of the war at home, Opposition writers were anxious about not only the international consequences of an allied victory, but also the domestic results. If Britain should emerge victorious, its ministers might be irremediably corrupted by their despotic Austrian, Prussian and Russian allies. In such an event, it was also unlikely that the ministry would fall, and the increased crown influence of war-time would not diminish and might even increase, because greater patronage might be available through new colonies conquered during the war.⁷⁷ To avert these evils, the remedy proposed by the Opposition, alongside a speedy settlement of peace, was a reformation of manners. This was a common cry in the 1790s, but in Foxite party terms it stood for the eradication of corruption in high places. Mr. Curwen told the Commons in 1797 that

He was not for a change of administration, which should have only for its object the putting one man into the place of another. The country would gain nothing by such a change. The change must be total, not of men, but of system. The immense influence of government must cease...⁷⁸

Fox was represented as a 'martyr of liberty' in contrast to the corrupt ministry and Court: as Stuart put it, 'He undauntedly struggled to avert the calamities of war; he did not succeed: But he succeeded in what was of much more immediate importance

⁷⁵ For Burke's part in Britain's entry to the war, see *The Evidence Summed Up*, p.27; [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.3-9; Waddington, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.33. For the APLP's responsibility, see the *Morning Chronicle*, 12, 23 February 1793.

⁷⁶ *P.H.*, xxx, 547, Fox, 28 February 1793; Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, pp.105, 136. See also *P.H.*, xxx, 1086, Lauderdale, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 666, Bedford, 30 May 1794; [Wilson], *Dialogue upon the Two Bills*, pp.33-40; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* pp.69-70, 65; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.59-62; Bigge, *Considerations on the State of Parties*, pp.44-5; R.H.M. Buddle Atkinson and G.A. Jackson (eds.), *Brougham and his early friends. Letters to James Loch 1798-1809* (3 vols.: London, 1908), i, 211, William Bryce to James Loch, 18 December 1800.

⁷⁷ Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, pp.211-7, 258-9; BL Add. MSS 47571 ff.98-v., Fox to Holland, December 1793.

⁷⁸ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 602, John Christian Curwen, 19 May 1797. See also *ibid.*, xxxiii, 191, 193-4, the Marquis of Lansdowne, 27 March 1797; Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.4-7.

perhaps, in shielding the remaining liberties of the English people.’⁷⁹ More explicitly, they bayed for the removal of the Pitt administration from office and its replacement by Fox and his friends.

It is evident that the war was usually simply the context in which they made their calls for a change of ministry. Fox wrote in 1800 to Grey that ‘the incapacity of Ministers, rather than peace with Denmark or with France &c. ought to be the point principally pushed out of doors, and, to a certain degree too, within.’⁸⁰ Lauderdale’s *Letters to the Peers of Scotland* called upon all his readers to

determine, after a due consideration of the respective conduct of the present Ministry, and of that great statesman, whether the talents requisite to save the country are to be found in the enlightened wisdom, in the capacious mind and prophetic spirit of Mr. Fox, or in the miserable policy, the time-serving expedients and wretched subterfuges of the present Cabinet.⁸¹

‘If the country, indeed, consider the administration of the right honourable gentleman to be a blessing,’ Fox told the Commons in the debate on the rupture of negotiations in December 1796, ‘they must take their choice between the continuance of that blessing and the restoration of peace.’⁸² Coleridge, writing in the *Morning Post*, declared that ‘Peace and the present Ministry are incompatible circumstances.’⁸³ 1797 was clearly a tense year, and the high-point for such demands; in that year also a letter was addressed to the Earl of Moira by five MPs who generally voted in support of the ministry, professedly backed by ‘a considerable number’ of other MPs, enclosing an address to the King which was

⁷⁹ Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, p.120. See also O’Gorman, *The Whig Party*, p.165; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 605-6, M.A. Taylor, March 1797; O’Byren, *Utrum Horum?* pp.97-101.

⁸⁰ BL Add. MS 47565 f.17v., Fox to Grey, 1800.

⁸¹ Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.313-4; see also Francis, *The Question as it Stood*, pp.2-3.

⁸² *P.H.*, xxxii, 1472, Fox, 30 December 1796. See also *ibid.*, xxxii, 19-21, Fox, 27 May 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 190-1, the Earl of Moira, 27 March 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 609, Benjamin Hobhouse, 19 May 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 876, Lansdowne, 2 November 1797; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.258-64; [Wilson], *A Dialogue Upon the Two Bills*, pp.23-5; Workman, *An Argument Against Continuing the War*, pp.87-9; ‘A New Song. By Captain Morris’, in *The Cambridge Intelligencer*, 4 October 1794, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.125-8.

⁸³ Samuel Taylor Coleridge, ‘On Peace. I. Incompatible Circumstances’, in the *Morning Post*, 2 January 1798, printed in David V. Erdman (ed.), *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (16 vols., general editors Lewis Patton and Peter Mann: Princeton and London, 1970ff.), iii, 10. See also Davis, *Dissent in Politics*, p.102, on William Smith; O’Byren, *Utrum Horum?* pp.62-3, 72-3, 81-116; Plowden, *A Friendly and Constitutional Address*, p.54; PRO HO 42/40/115ff., address of the Mayor, Aldermen and Liverymen of London to George III, 23 March 1797.

highly critical of Pitt and his conduct of the war, both of which Moira passed on to George III.⁸⁴

Motions were moved in Parliament specifically calling for the dismissal of Pitt himself.⁸⁵ Another tactic was to call for Parliament to be resolved into a Committee on the State of the Nation, to inquire into Britain's circumstances under the present government.⁸⁶ Such calls continued to be made even after Pitt and his Cabinet had resigned in February 1801.⁸⁷ Sheridan affected indignation when it was suggested that the Opposition's motivation for criticizing the ministry might be party politics and the desire to taste power: 'It is too much to see such men, covered equally with crime and shame, besmeared at once with blood and mire, erect their crests, and boldly demand support from the country, because they have endangered it, and attempt to proscribe as factious traitors, those who have fruitlessly endeavoured to save it.'⁸⁸

Clearly, much of the Foxite argument against the war with revolutionary France was motivated largely by party politics. Some of it, however, could be recognized as a principled opposition to war in general or to the type of war being waged by the British government. Fox himself was genuinely convinced that the cause of the French Revolution was glorious, even when it was sullied by violence.⁸⁹ These arguments, however, were usually used simply to enhance the Foxite case.

The arguments against war in general were not difficult to make. It was always a great evil, Opposition writers and MPs pronounced. 'Do we not recollect the horrors we all felt at the news of the battle at Paris on the tenth of August, and the massacres on the third and fourth of September?' asked one pamphleteer. 'Yet THESE ARE NO OTHER THAN MATTERS OF COURSE IN WARS!' Wars were perhaps inevitable in former, savage ages, 'But now, in these civilized and

⁸⁴ *LCGIII*, ii, 585-8, the Earl of Moira to the King, 2 June 1797. The five signatories to the letter to Moira were Sir George Shuckburgh-Evelyn, Sir John Sinclair, Bryan Edwards, Sir Christopher Hawkins and Joseph Foster Barham.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, xxxiii, 183-5, the Earl of Suffolk, 27 March 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 595-6, Harvey Christian Combe, 19 May 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 735-44, 766-9, the Duke of Bedford, 30 May 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 1313-20, the Duke of Bedford, 22 March 1798; *ibid.*, xxxv, 697-710, Thomas Tyrwhitt Jones, 4 December 1800.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 1408-9, Fox, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1434-9, Guilford, 30 March 1795; *ibid.*, 1449, Lansdowne, 30 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 902-911, Grey, 10 March 1796; *ibid.*, xxxv, 405-10, Charles C. Western, 9 July 1800; *ibid.*, xxxv, 602-16, Tierney, November 1800; *ibid.*, xxxv, 871-5, Earl Fitzwilliam and the Earl of Suffolk, amendment to the Address of Thanks, 2 February 1801.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, xxxv, 1051-1067, Grey, 25 March 1801; *ibid.*, xxxv, 1169-79, the Earl of Darnley, 20 March 1801.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, xxxii, 1255, Sheridan, 2 November 1796.

⁸⁹ See, for example, BL Add. MSS 47571 ff.28v.-9, 35v.-, 85v.-6, 96-8, Fox to Holland, 14 June, 1 August, 7 November, December 1793.

enlightened times, war can always be avoided with honour by a state powerful like England.' Indeed, war hindered the progress of civilization.⁹⁰ It ought never to be engaged in 'until after every effort and speculation have been employed to repel its approach,' censured Erskine. Fox told the Commons that war was detrimental to the general morality and humanity of the peoples involved; it calloused their hearts and minds to a state of indifference to cruelty and horror.⁹¹ Those who supported the war were reminded also of the hardships it produced for ordinary people. It was easy, claimed the Duke of Bedford, for ministers to expend other people's blood and treasure, untouched by their distresses. Many poems and songs were published in opposition journals and periodicals lamenting the sorrow of war-widows.⁹²

In the present case, the Opposition argued that war was no answer to the ill-effects, imaginary or otherwise, of the French Revolution on Europe. Like religion, politics ought not to be propagated by the sword. Force could not ultimately achieve a desirable state of affairs. It was hardly beneficial to 'cut [Frenchmen's] throats to prevent their dying of rot'. Moreover, as the Duke of Bedford pointed out in the debate on the government's rejection of Bonaparte's offer to negotiate in January 1800, as long as the conflict lasted, France was not likely to become more stable and peaceful.⁹³

Furthermore, any intentions the British government had to interfere within France and its form of government were regarded as unjustifiable. No state, the Foxite Whigs argued, had the right to interfere in another. They were unconvinced by Burke's justification of interference in France by the law of civil vicinity, in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*.⁹⁴ The civil case, argued Ralph Broome, presupposed an established rule of law which laid down what was and what was not a nuisance, and this was decided by a judge and based on past experience. The case of the French Revolution was entirely new, and it remained to be seen if the republican government of France was more injurious to its international neighbourhood than the previous government; moreover, there was no impartial judge between nations as

⁹⁰ *War with France!* pp.26-9. See also *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, pp.7-8; Sir Nathaniel William Wraxall, *The Correspondence Between a Traveller and a Minister of State, in October and November 1792; Preceded by Remarks Upon the Origin and the Final Object of the Present War; as well as upon the Political Position of Europe in October, 1796* (London, 1796), pp.24, 33-4, 46, 57-80.

⁹¹ Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, p.114; *P.H.*, xxxi, 404-5, Fox, 17 April 1794.

⁹² *P.H.*, xxxi, 993-4, Bedford, 30 December 1794; poems in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.179-181, 153-4, 156, 253, 267-9. See also *The Retort Politic Upon Master Burke*, p.28; Morris, *The Crisis*, p.124; *P.H.*, xxxii, 1499, the Earl of Derby, 30 December 1796; *ibid.*, xxxv, 538, Jones, November 1800; xxxv, 699-700, Jones, 4 December 1800.

⁹³ Williams, *Rights of the People*, p.65; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1223, Bedford, 28 January 1800. See also Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, pp.324, 334.

⁹⁴ See p.23 above.

there was between individuals. Even if the interference were undertaken for the good of France, it was still a violation of principle, and it also might furnish other, less unselfish, nations with warrants for abuse.⁹⁵ A stable French government could be achieved only if France was left in peace by hostile troops and its government approved, both in theory and in practice, by its own people.⁹⁶ Opposition writers were quick to point out the inconsistency involved in complaining that the French were seeking to spread their own opinions on government to Britain and at the same time planning to 'carry fire and the sword into the heart of France' in order to impose another form of government upon it by force.⁹⁷

Moreover, it was impossible to wage war, either effectively or with justice, against principles or opinions. Opinions could only ever be advanced or made to retreat by appealing to people's minds. 'Let us endeavour to prevent the rising of the sun, or to stay the swelling of the ocean, for the material world is in some degree subject to the control of mechanical force,' wrote Broome; 'but the intellectual world scoffs at the weak attempt which would limit its operations by the coarse and clumsy restrictions of bolts, and chains.'⁹⁸ A war against opinions would become a 'war of extermination', or total war, a phenomenon inimical to civilization.⁹⁹

This line of argument did lay the Foxite Whigs open to a charge of inconsistency, as Pocock points out: it was difficult for them to take successfully the moral high ground of insisting that wars of principle should not be fought, since they clearly favoured the ideology of the French above that of the allies and ignored or excused French aggression in Europe. They too often identified French principles with all that was good in philosophy and humanity:

If these are the men [i.e. true Jacobins] who are to be extirpated everywhere, and especially in *France*, I am sure it will be impossible, unless those who feel it their interest to extirpate them,

⁹⁵ [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.53; Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, pp.ii, vi-vii. See also *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, pp.33-5; *The Retort Politic on Master Burke*, p.53; *P.H.*, xxxi, 396-8, Fox, 17 April 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 618, Fox, 30 May 1794.

⁹⁶ Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, pp.xv-xix; *Considerations on the French War*, p.29.

⁹⁷ O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* p.60; also Erskine, speech at the trial of Thomas Hardy, Ridgway (ed.), *Speeches of Erskine*, iii, 433; *P.H.*, xxx, 1254-5, Fox, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 141-7, Stanhope, 4 April 1794.

⁹⁸ Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.51; [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.16, 19, 20. See also *War with France!* p.31; Waddington, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.15-16; Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, pp.102-3; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.57-8; Macleod, *Considerations on False and Real Alarms*, pp.18-21; *P.H.*, xxxii, 172-3, Fox, 29 October 1795; the *Morning Chronicle*, 23 September 1793.

⁹⁹ *Considerations on the French Wars*, p.36; *P.H.*, xxx, 364-5, Fox, 12 February 1793. See also [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.21; *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, p.4; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, p.69; *P.H.*, xxx, 1254, Fox, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 657, Fox, 30 May 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 659, Bedford, 30 May 1794.

also feel themselves strong enough to destroy humanity, truth, philosophy, nay, the Heavens themselves.¹⁰⁰

This was also awkward because of the violence and terror and blatant illiberality with which 'French principles' were increasingly associated. Fox, in a speech to the House of Commons in April 1793, tried to get round the problem by turning the argument back on the allies: 'If, as he feared, this war was undertaken against principles, let us look to the conduct of Germany, Russia and Prussia and, if the spirit of chivalry was so alive amongst us, see if there were no giants, no monsters, no principles against which we had better turn our arms.'¹⁰¹ The Opposition also pointed to the example of Poland, which Russia, Austria and Prussia had shamelessly invaded and plundered and partitioned for their own advantage, and they asked where the guarantee was that the allies would not commit similar atrocities within France? Why was Britain interfering in France because of its violence towards other countries when she had not acted to halt the progress of the allies in Poland?¹⁰² The Foxite Whigs complained also about allied 'war crimes' against the earlier revolutionaries Lafayette and Dumouriez, both Whig heroes of the Revolution.¹⁰³ In the end, however, with the rise of the autocratic rule of Napoleon Bonaparte and his demonstrated lack of respect for representative government such as that of the Swiss cantons, some who had previously supported Fox in his campaign against the war felt compelled to declare their sympathies against Napoleonic France and ceased their hostility to the British war, now antigallican if not anti-Jacobin. The Whiggish poets William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake and Robert Southey are four of the best-known of these. Wordsworth later wrote:

I disapproved of the war against France at its commencement, thinking—which was perhaps an error—that it might have been avoided; but after Buonaparte had violated the independence of Switzerland, my heart turned against him, and against the nation that could submit to be the instrument of such an outrage.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History*, p.285; Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* pp.89-90.

¹⁰¹ *P.H.*, xxx, 724, Fox, 25 April 1793.

¹⁰² Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, pp.110-1; Thomas Holcroft, *A Letter to the Right Honourable William Windham, on the Intemperance and Dangerous Tendency of his Public Conduct* (London, 1795), p.37; *P.H.*, xxx, 440, Grey, 18 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 452, Sheridan, 18 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 997-8, Fox, 17 June 1793.

¹⁰³ *P.H.*, xxx, 1479, Fox, 6 March 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 30-7, 43-5, 52, General Fitzpatrick, Fox, Smith, 17 March 1794; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1349-57, 1365-9, Fitzpatrick, Fox, 16 December 1796.

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in Robert Greacen, 'Wordsworth as Politician', in Muriel Spark and Derek Stanford (eds.), *Tribute to Wordsworth* (London, 1950), p.213. Wordsworth's change of heart is revealed in his autobiographical poem, *The Prelude* (1805, 1850); see also E.P. Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', *Past and Present*, 142 (1994), 135-6.

Coleridge wrote of how he, too, had 'blessed the paeans of delivered France, And hung my head and wept at Britain's name', until he had heard the lament of 'Freedom...From Bleak Helvetia's icy cavern sent'.¹⁰⁵ Blake's 'The Four Zoas' reports the Satanic degeneration of Orc (the spirit of French revolutionary liberty) into a serpent which joins 'the stars of Urizen in Power' (the Continental despots), symbolizing Napoleon's crude seizure of power on 18 Brumaire 1799, abandoning all pretence at representative government.¹⁰⁶ Southey, too, was disillusioned by the coup d'état: 'Damn the French!' he wrote to a friend in January 1800, '—that came heartily from the depths of a Jacobine heart.' Southey was never reconciled to Pitt's ministry, but he took up a minor appointment under the Addington administration.¹⁰⁷

III

A major Opposition tactic was criticism of the government's conduct of the war. Sometimes they simply grumpily listed French successes, failed British and allied campaigns and sums of money spent to date and made gloomy prognostications for the success of the allied war in the light of these facts. Francis Plowden urged his readers not to listen to glowing ministerial reports of allied success, but to ask relatives or friends in the army or navy for true assessments.¹⁰⁸ The Opposition also made a great deal of individual campaigns that failed, such as the French recaptures of Dunkirk and Toulon and the expeditions to Quiberon in 1795, Holland in 1799 and Ferrol in 1801. The ministry was further criticized for the ease with which the French fleet might have invaded Ireland in December 1796, had not foul weather thwarted them. The Foxites found fault with the British capture of Toulon before it

¹⁰⁵ S.T. Coleridge, 'France. An Ode' (1798), ll.41-2, 64-6, in *The Poetical Works of S.T. Coleridge* (Chandos Classics edition: London), pp.135-8. See also his 'Recantation' (1798); and Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', p.124, on his renouncing friendship with the radical John Thelwall in 1801.

¹⁰⁶ William Blake, 'The Four Zoas', especially Night VIIb, in Geoffrey Keynes (ed.), *Blake. Complete Writings with Variant Readings* (Oxford, 1969), p.338; David V. Erdman, *Blake. Prophet Against Empire: A Poet's Interpretation of the History of His Own Times* (New York, 1991), pp.316-7.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Geoffrey Carnall, *Robert Southey and His Age. The Development of a Conservative Mind* (Oxford, 1960), p.55. On all four poets, see also Iain Robertson Scott, "'Things As They Are': the Literary Response to the French Revolution 1789-1815", in H.T. Dickinson (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (London, 1989), pp.229-49.

¹⁰⁸ Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.114-7; Plowden, *A Friendly and Constitutional Address*, pp.45-7. See also *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, pp.8-11, 22-3; *P.H.*, xxx, 1076, the Earl of Derby, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1100-4, Col. Tarleton, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1243-4, Sheridan, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1048-9, Fox, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1351-3, 1379-1382, Fox, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 159-61, Sheridan, 29 October 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 596-7, Fox, 9 December 1795; the *Morning Chronicle*, 24 August 1797, 23 July 1799.

was evacuated, because of its association with counter-revolution, and because of the expense of defending it. Generally speaking, however, they were only able to criticize government strategy after the event, when ministers were able to argue that such criticism was easy to make with hindsight. Delays and incompetence were severely censured, and the responsibility was always laid at ministers' feet, never with the British forces or their commanders.¹⁰⁹ The *Morning Chronicle*'s opinion of the Dunkirk fiasco was typical:

Whatever may be the issue, no blame can be imputed to the Duke of York. The expedition to Dunkirk was not of his suggesting. It was a measure imposed upon him by express orders from home, against his own better judgement, devised in presumptuous ignorance, and balked of the promised means of execution.

Even when the British troops or fleets won victories, the Opposition complained that the advantages were squandered by an administration inept in matters of strategy.¹¹⁰ Like loyalists, the Opposition seemed bewildered by the naval mutiny, which seemed to be 'inconsistent with the brave, generous and open character of British seamen', but, unlike loyalists, they were sure that 'the country were to look to the ministers for the great cause of all this', for not having provided sufficiently good conditions for the sailors.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ On Dunkirk, see: the *Morning Chronicle*, 12 September 1793; *P.H.*, xxxi, 240, Maitland, 10 April 1794. On Toulon, see: the *Morning Chronicle*, 16, 24, 26 September 1793; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.283-4; *P.H.*, xxxi, 241-3, Maitland, 10 April 1794. On the Quiberon expedition (1795), see: Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.25-6; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* pp.57-9; [Wilson], *Dialogue Upon the Two Bills*, p.26; *P.H.*, xxxii, 170-1, Fox, 29 October 1795. On the French invasion attempt (1796), see: *P.H.*, xxxiii, 5-10, Whitbread, 3 March 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 23, Fox, 3 March 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 107-10, the Earl of Albemarle, 16 March 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 112-24, *passim*, the Earl of Carlisle, the Marquis of Abercorn, the Earl of Moira, the Duke of Bedford, the Earl of Guilford, the Marquis of Lansdowne. On the Dutch expedition (1799), see *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1398-1409, Sheridan, 10 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1416-8, Tierney, 10 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1419-24, Holland, 10 February 1800; the *Morning Chronicle*, 19 August 1799 (an unusually early criticism of an expedition), 29, 30, 31 August 1799, 5 September 1799 (readiness to rejoice when British troops were victorious), 10, 26 September 1799, 2, 10, 15, 23, 26 October 1799. On the Ferrol expedition (1801), see: *P.H.*, xxxv, 979-80, Charles Sturt, 19 February 1801.

¹¹⁰ The *Morning Chronicle*, 13 September 1793. On the navy, see also Francis, *The Question as it Stood in March 1798*, p.23; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.294-8; *P.H.*, xxxi, 905-6, Bedford, Howe, 13 June 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 908, Fox, 16 June 1794; xxxi, 1380-2, Fox, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 2, Fox, 3 March 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 875, Lansdowne, 2 November 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 1553-4, Sir John Sinclair, 20 November 1798. The Protest against the Vote of Thanks to Lord Hood for conducting the expedition to Corsica, registered by Bedford, Lauderdale, Derby, Thanet and Albemarle on 17 June 1794 (*ibid.*, xxxi, 935-6) shows that Foxites did not automatically join in patriotic effusions to naval figures—they might be less generous to the highest ranking officers and in any case that smelled of patronage. See also *ibid.*, xxxi, 955, Sheridan, 20 June 1794. On the army, see O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* pp.72-3; the *Morning Chronicle*, 12 September 1793, 23, 24 October 1799.

¹¹¹ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 487-8, Sheridan, 8 May 1797. See also *ibid.*, xxxiii, 501-4, Whitbread, 10 May 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 801-3, Sheridan, 2 June 1797; the *Morning Chronicle*, 22 April 1797, 15 May 1797, 2, 12 June 1797.

Another constant Opposition complaint was the expense of the war. They mentioned national debt increases in tones of horror, and predicted ruin for Britain if another war should arise before there had been time to heal the nation's finances from the ravages of the present one. The government was condemned for the weight of taxes it was imposing on the lower classes.¹¹² The conflict also robbed essential British agriculture of farm labourers, pressed into the navy or the army, and great numbers of them killed.¹¹³ It dried up commerce and drove British manufacturers out of business and labourers out of work.¹¹⁴ The greatest extravagance complained of by Opposition MPs, however, was the subsidies and loans granted by the British government to its allies. Fox forecast in 1794 that when other powers saw Prussia's successful blackmailing of the British ministers to provide money in return for its armies, they would do likewise and Britain would end up bearing the whole cost of the war. 'Had members known how accurate this prediction was to prove,' remarks John Sherwig, 'perhaps more than thirty-three of them would have voted in favour of Fox's motion to deny the subsidy.'¹¹⁵ Fox and his supporters complained that the King of Prussia and the Austrian Emperor were not to be trusted to fulfil their military obligations or to repay loans fully and on time. 'Our allies,' observed Lansdowne in March 1795, 'appeared to be allies only for the purpose of taking our money.'¹¹⁶

On the possible invasion of Britain by the French, Opposition writers and MPs divided their comments between doubts that the government had provided

¹¹² *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, p.11; Fox, *The Celebrated Speech...at the Shakespeare Tavern*, pp.11-12; *P.H.*, xxx, 1483, Fox, 6 March 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1354-9, Fox, 24 March 1795. See also Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.2, 62-7; Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 104, Fox to Holland, 12 April 1795; the *Morning Chronicle*, 18 December 1795.

¹¹³ *A Retrospect*, pp.20-3; *P.H.*, xxxi, 970-1, Derby, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 974-5, Lansdowne, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1351-4, Fox, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 895, Bryan Edwards, 2 November 1797; the *Morning Chronicle*, 11 September 1799.

¹¹⁴ Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.29-30; the *Morning Chronicle*, 20 September 1793 ('A Serious Address to the Landed, Commercial, and Manufacturing Interest, of the Town of Manchester, and its Environs'), 25 September 1793, 26 September 1793 ('Dialogue').

¹¹⁵ *P.H.*, xxxi, 442-51, Fox, 30 April 1794; Sherwig, *Guineas and Gunpowder*, pp.43-4. See also *P.H.*, xxx, 1310-2, 1316, Fox and Grey, 31 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 456-8, Lansdowne, 30 April 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1305-6, Fox, 5 February 1795; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1359-67, Fox, 24 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 246-7, Fox, 4 April 1797.

¹¹⁶ *P.H.*, xxxi, 1445, Lansdowne, 30 March 1795. See also *A Letter to the Greatest Hypocrite*, p.15; [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.57-68; Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* pp.27-8, 31-6, 74-83; *P.H.*, xxxi, 976, Lansdowne, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1055-6, Fox, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1269-70, Lansdowne, 27 January 1795; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1304-5, Fox, 5 February 1795; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1436, Guilford, 30 March 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 40-2, Fox, 28 May 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 47, Lauderdale, 5 June 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 221-30, Sheridan, 4 April 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 467-70, Fox, 29 April 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiv, Tierney, 7 June 1799; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1193, Holland, 11 October 1799; *ibid.*, xxxiv, Holland, 14 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxv, 436-9, Tierney, 18 July 1800; *ibid.*, xxxv, 1422, Sheridan, 18 May 1801; *ibid.*, xxxv, 1427, Jones, 18 May 1801; the *Morning Chronicle*, 19 September 1793, 9 August 1799, 10 September 1799; 'A New Song', in *The Courier*, 27 December 1800, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.251-3.

adequately for the defence of the country and patriotic certainty that the British people would be more than a match for any invading force. The author of *The Evidence Summed Up* (1794) believed that unemployment, poverty and social division meant that Britain was ill-prepared to meet a French attack and might have to use foreign mercenaries to protect its own beloved constitution. The *Morning Chronicle* ridiculed the batteries being erected around the coast as ineffectual and indeed counter-productive, since they would require too many men to operate them, which would weaken the land forces.¹¹⁷ Sir Philip Francis, on the other hand, thought that, 'Under *any* administration, the spirit of the people is sufficient to repel and defeat a direct attack.' Nevertheless, if the French merely kept Britain in suspense with the threat of invasion, that might well ruin Britain, through the expenditure of vast sums on preparations against false threats.¹¹⁸ Dennis O'Bryen solved the equation by arguing that a French invasion could never succeed against an armed and united British people, but that while the country remained torn by discontent and division under the Pitt administration, it was in grave danger from any such attack.¹¹⁹ Certainly, the Foxites would have assisted in the defence of the country had an invasion occurred. Fox told Grey in 1799 that he did not want to cooperate until an invasion actually arose, so that the government might not have any further encouragement for their repressive measures, but that in the event all who were able should exert themselves 'to the utmost' against the French.¹²⁰ Sheridan spoke on 20 April 1798 in support of a spirited and united opposition to any French invasion, earning the rather stiff thanks of Pitt—George III, having heard earlier of Sheridan's intention to speak in this vein, had instructed Pitt not to welcome his support too warmly: 'any compliments would disgust friends, and certainly are not necessary; indeed, I should wish some intimation might be made that this change of language was very late.'¹²¹

Since the Opposition could not criticize the armed forces, because of the patriotic attitude they wanted to display, they raised constitutional matters concerning them instead. They argued that British Dissenters and Roman Catholics ought to be permitted to become officers in the army and navy, since they had long

¹¹⁷ *The Evidence Summed Up*, p.37; the *Morning Chronicle*, 12 October 1796. See also *P.H.*, xxxiii, 201, Sheridan, 28 March 1797.

¹¹⁸ Francis, *The Question as it Stood in March 1798*, pp.2, 23. See also *P.H.*, xxxii, 1213-5, Sheridan, 18 October 1796; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1245-8, Fox, 2 November 1796; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 16-18, Grey, 3 March 1797; the *Morning Chronicle*, 25 September 1797, 10 August 1799.

¹¹⁹ O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* pp.74, 77.

¹²⁰ BL Add. MS 47565 f.4, Fox to Grey, [1799]; c.f. *P.H.*, xxxii, 1216-23, Fox, 18 October 1796. See also the *Morning Chronicle*, 13 October 1796.

¹²¹ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1424-8, Sheridan, 20 April 1798; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 1428-9, Pitt, 20 April 1798; *LCGIII*, iii, 48-9, George III to Grenville, Pitt to George III, George III to Pitt, 20, 21 April 1798.

shown their loyalty to their country in times of national crisis, and now that French and Irish Catholics were being employed by the government in this capacity.¹²² Second, they complained that ministerial measures to strengthen home defence, by increasing the numbers of the militia and by instituting the Volunteers, were unconstitutional and might prove to be the beginnings of a standing army, the traditional Whig symbol of court corruption. When only the propertied were 'enlisted' in the Volunteers, the Opposition worried about the strengthening of the aristocracy at the expense of the people and of the crown. When the Volunteers were widened in 1798 to include all able-bodied men, aristocratic members of the Opposition complained that the landed classes had been deprived of their traditional privilege of raising their own local defence forces. Ministers were accused of raising the alarm of invasion simply in order to be able to increase the number of troops within Britain. These fears were further substantiated by the erection of barracks to house regular army troops on duty within Britain.¹²³ The voluntary subscription which was established to pay for the Volunteers was opposed because it would lead to social intimidation and invidious personal distinctions and because it was unconstitutional.¹²⁴ Rather, it was suggested, a new tax should be imposed, to be levied on placemen and the holders of sinecures.¹²⁵ Third, the Opposition claimed that keeping foreign soldiers within Britain was also unconstitutional and also might lead to the formation of a standing army. This issue was raised by the temporary installation of Hessian troops in barracks in Hampshire and on the Isle of Wight in 1794, and by the employment of French *émigré* regiments in the British army.¹²⁶

This Opposition tactic, however, laid its users open again to the charge of double standards and, in consequence, of engaging in factious party politics. In order to be able to criticize Pitt and his Cabinet on as many grounds as possible, they wanted to be able both to oppose the war altogether, for the various reasons already

¹²² *P.H.*, xxxi, 609-13, Sheridan, 26 May 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 614, Fox, 26 May 1794.

¹²³ Bigge, *Considerations on the State of Parties*, pp.24-5; *P.H.*, xxx, 473-7, Taylor, 22 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 484, Courtenay, 22 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxxii, 937-43, Fox, 8 April 1796; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1229-30, Curwen, 31 October 1796; *ibid.*, 1232-8, Fox, 31 October 1796; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1185-6, Carnarvon, Fitzwilliam and Buckinghamshire, 4 October 1799 (note that Fitzwilliam and Buckinghamshire were temporarily disgruntled supporters of the war); the *Morning Chronicle*, 18 November 1796, 12 June 1797.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxi, 207-12, Francis, 1 April 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 224-5, Fox, 1 April 1794.

¹²⁵ The *Morning Chronicle*, 27 December 1796; Coleridge, 'Voluntary Subscription', in the *Morning Post*, 22 January 1798, printed in Erdman (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, iii, 17-20; *P.H.*, xxxi, 165-9, George Harrison and Thomas W. Coke, 8 April 1794.

¹²⁶ On the Hessian troops, see the various speeches in the debates on 10 and 21 February 1794 in *P.H.*, xxx, 1363-91, 1424-39; on the *émigré* regiments, see the debate on 11, 14 and 17 April 1794, *P.H.*, xxxi, 373-429, and also *ibid.*, xxxi, 655-6, Fox, 30 May 1794.

outlined, and to find fault with the way in which ministers conducted it. Criticism of the conduct of the war in its first year had the added appeal of being a potential means of retaining the support of the Portland Whigs. Fox wrote to William Adam on 18 September 1793 about the evacuation of Dunkirk:

...if it was thought foolish before the failure, what must it be now? Would it be impossible to get our old friends to act with me at least with respect to the conduct of the War? I sometimes think not...¹²⁷

It was not necessarily inconsistent to complain that the war was both undesirable and badly managed; but it was difficult to complain quite so much as the Opposition did about the conduct of various campaigns in a war with which they were supposed to disagree altogether, without being found guilty of criticizing for its own sake. The *Morning Chronicle* of 22 February 1793 summarized well Whig thinking on the war, including in a nutshell doubts of the necessity of the war, claims to patriotism, criticism of ministerial management and calls for a change of administration:

However we may have got into the war, the war must be supported. This country cannot, must not see the French extend their maritime frontier through the whole Dutch territory; but if we are to avert this fatality, we must begin by addressing the Crown to remove the Ministers, whose imbecile councils, in bringing us into the calamity, give us no confidence in their talents to conduct it.¹²⁸

In all their criticisms of the government's conduct of the war, then, the Opposition tried to substantiate their claim that 'Pittism' was a system of misrule and corruption which ought to be dismantled and replaced with the untainted rule by Foxites.

Peace was constantly demanded by the Foxites, who did not support the continuance of the conflict at any stage in the 1790s. If there had been a justifiable motive for going to war in the defence of the United Provinces, they argued, the British government ought to have made peace with France after the French troops had been evacuated from Holland in 1793.¹²⁹ War was a greater evil and a greater source of evil than peace with revolutionary France, since either failure or success was dangerous to Britain's welfare. Defeat would establish a great military republic in the heart of western Europe, hostile to Britain, while success would destroy a valuable market for British manufactures and strengthen the bastions of European

¹²⁷ BL Add. MS 47569 f.15, Fox to Adam, 18 September 1793. On the poverty of army pay and conditions, see the *Morning Chronicle*, 27 September 1793, 7 October 1795.

¹²⁸ See also *P.H.*, xxx, 1267-1271, Fox, 21 January 1794.

¹²⁹ *Considerations on the French Wars*, pp.24-5; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, p.265; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, p.40; *P.H.*, xxx, 996-7, Fox, 17 June 1793; *ibid.*, xxx, 1075, the Duke of Norfolk, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 970, Derby, 30 December 1794.

despotism. Even a humiliating peace would be better than further military disasters and infamy. 'We have sacrificed much to experiments of war,' stated the *Morning Chronicle* wearily on 25 October 1799; 'why may we not sacrifice a little to experiments of peace?'¹³⁰

The Foxite Opposition was adamant that the French government sincerely desired peace. Peace was too great a blessing for it to refuse, for it would allow it to restore order and peace within the nation. If France refused to make peace, it would throw the whole responsibility for the war upon itself, divide its own population, and strengthen the resolve of the British people against it. Violent speeches were made in both the French and British legislative assemblies and these should not be seen as reliable barometers of attitudes towards peace.¹³¹ Opposition writers and MPs found nothing objectionable in Napoleon's offer to negotiate in December 1799, and claimed that it was a sincere offer of peace talks. Even if he were a military despot, it must be in his interest to consolidate his gains and allow France a respite by settling a peace; and it was impossible to know that he was insincere in his offer without testing it by participating in the negotiations he suggested.¹³² Fox was sure that the French people were anxious for peace and that this must influence their rulers.¹³³

The Opposition claimed to be convinced that public opinion in Britain was also very largely hostile to the war and eager for peace. Once the eyes of the people had been opened to the corrupt purposes of ministers in fomenting great public alarm immediately previous to the war and in carrying the country into war—whether this awakening had come abruptly by way of the treason trials, or gradually, through experience of the war—they had begun to desire peace, although they might not voice this, through fear of a repressive government. Fox wrote to Holland in

¹³⁰ *A Letter to the Greatest Hypocrite*, p.16. See pp.11-14 above; also Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, p.310, 342-3; Workman, *A Letter to the Duke of Portland*, pp.98-9; Fox, *The Celebrated Speech...at the Shakespeare Tavern*, p.9; Macleod, *Considerations on False and Real Alarms*, pp.23-5; Plowden, *A Friendly and Constitutional Address*, p.48; *A Retrospect*, p.25; *P.H.*, xxx, 1395, Lansdowne, 17 February 1794; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1505-13, Stanhope, 20 February 1800; the *Morning Chronicle*, 26 September 1795, 8 September 1797.

¹³¹ Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.21; the *Morning Chronicle*, 6 October 1796. See also Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, p.340; *The Evidence Summed Up*, pp.35-6; [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.34-6; Workman, *A Letter to the Duke of Portland*, p.76; *P.H.*, xxx, 1404, Lansdowne, 17 February 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 668-9, Bedford, 30 May 1794; the *Morning Chronicle*, 4 November 1796, 9 June 1797.

¹³² *Strictures on the Overtures of Peace, Made by the Chief Executive Magistrate of France, to His Majesty the King of Great Britain, and on the Answer, Transmitted by Lord Grenville, Secretary of State for the Foreign Department, to Mons. Talleyrand-Perigord, Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the French Republic* (London, 1800), pp.1-5; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1225, Bedford, 28 January 1800; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1389-91, Fox, 3 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1294, Erskine, 3 February 1800.

¹³³ Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 184, Fox to Holland, October 1800.

June 1794 that he believed that 'the country is heartily tired of the war, but men dare not shew themselves'.¹³⁴ Financiers, monied men, manufacturers and labourers alike reprobated it from the beginning for its adverse effects on commerce and industry.¹³⁵ 'It is said, as a proof of the popularity of the War, that 1500 recruits were raised last week in Manchester,' reported the *Morning Chronicle* of 22 February 1793. 'Alas! is it not rather a proof, that the war has already suspended the looms of Manchester?'¹³⁶

Another staple Opposition argument for peace was that Britain was unlikely to be able to conquer France or to achieve a counter-revolution there, and it was therefore not worth continuing in the attempt. Britain was in danger of making the same mistake as it had in the American war, that of underestimating the enthusiasm and commitment of the republican people for their new government, and the French people had considerably more resources and experience of arms than had the Americans. 'The pillars of the globe are not more durable than the Republic of France,' declaimed William Williams.¹³⁷ No single army could defeat that of France, according to Col. Norman Macleod, and the allies were too divided and unco-ordinated to solve the difficulty together. Furthermore, not only did France have a powerful army but it had become an armed nation. Britain's small force, often abandoned by its allies and threatened by neutral nations, could expect to make little military impact upon it, at least until it too became a militarized nation, totally dedicated in every aspect of its resources to fighting and winning the war.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ Ibid., 76-7, Fox to Holland, 23 June 1794. See also Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.14; *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, p.24; Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, p.117; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.28, 33-4; *P.H.*, xxx, 1082, Lansdowne, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 967-8, Guilford, 30 December 1794; Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 121, Fox to Holland, 10 September 1795.

¹³⁵ *P.H.*, xxx, 446, Major Maitland, 18 February 1793; *ibid.*, xxxii, 25, Fox, 27 May 1795.

¹³⁶ See also *The Retort Politic on Master Burke*, pp.42-3; *P.H.*, xxx, 995-6, 1002-3, Fox, 17 June 1793; *ibid.*, xxxii, 733, Fox, 15 February 1796.

¹³⁷ Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.54. See also Waddington, *Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.15-16; *Considerations on the French War*, pp.37-8; *The Evidence Summed Up!!!* p.40; *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, p.3; *The Retort Politic on Master Burke*, p.63; Macleod, *Considerations on False and Real Alarms*, p.13; Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, pp.113-4; Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* p.49, 55-73; Workman, *A Letter to the Duke of Portland*, pp.108-9; *Reasons Against Refusing to Negotiate with France*, pp.9-26; BL Add. MSS 47571 ff.34v-5, Fox to Holland, 1 August 1793; *P.H.*, xxx, 1265-6, Fox, 21 January 1794; the *Morning Chronicle*, 18 September 1795, 10 October 1795, 25 July 1797, 8 September 1797, 23 July 1799.

¹³⁸ Macleod, *Considerations on False and Real Alarms*, pp.10-11. See also *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, pp.18-20; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, p.72; Lauderdale, *Letters to the Peers of Scotland*, pp.71-2, 255-8; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* p.73; Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* pp.22-6, 73, 113-5; *P.H.*, xxx, 1071-3, Guilford, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1098-9, the Earl of Wycombe, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1470, Whitbread, 6 March 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 399-403, Fox, 17 April 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 660-1, Bedford, 30 May 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1130-3, 1141-3, Stanhope, 6 January 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 169-171, Fox, 29 October 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 26-33, Tierney, 11 December 1798; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1392-3, Fox, 3 February 1800.

Britain, said Lansdowne, had become a 'Don Quixote' figure, fighting a crusade against the French windmill.¹³⁹ Sometimes, whether arguing *ad hominem* for the sake of party gain, or whether in all sincerity, members of the Opposition confessed that they no longer approved of the French system, but they claimed that Britain had no chance of changing it and should therefore abandon the conflict.¹⁴⁰ It was better to make peace before Britain was beaten into it.¹⁴¹

The Foxites extolled the blessings of peace, and declared that all objections to negotiations were vapid. If the French government was untrustworthy, atheist and cruel how much better were Britain's allies and other associates or, indeed, past French governments? It had nothing to do with the fact that it was a republic.¹⁴² The instability of the French government was no excuse for refusing to negotiate, for it was unlikely to become more stable during the continuation of a war. Moreover, this and other objections could no longer consistently be urged by ministers after they had first sought negotiations in 1796—indeed, Fox pointed out in 1794 that Pitt had held talks with Maret and Auckland with Dumouriez in early 1793, before the outbreak of the war.¹⁴³ Negotiations by themselves could do no harm, and might even strengthen Britain's fighting position.¹⁴⁴ According to Whigs, Burke and other supporters of the war only argued against negotiating with France because they realized that their arguments against peace itself were so weak and insubstantial.¹⁴⁵ Fox argued that Britain ought to initiate negotiations because it was the aggressor, and because it was the weaker party and ought to acknowledge this.¹⁴⁶ Britain's alliances were no reason to hold back from negotiating, since the other powers

¹³⁹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 459, Lansdowne, 30 April 1794.

¹⁴⁰ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1535-8, Lansdowne, November 1798; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1052, Tierney, 7 June 1799.

¹⁴¹ *The Evidence Summed Up*, pp.33-4; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* p.35; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1059, Fox, 30 December 1794.

¹⁴² Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, pp.379-88; Workman, *A Letter to the Duke of Portland*, pp.21-45; Waddington, *Remarks on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.7; Morres, *The Crisis*, p.160; Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* pp.111-2; [Wilson], *Dialogue Upon the Two Bills*, pp.41-3; *P.H.*, xxx, 1259-60, 1266, Fox, 21 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1295, Stanhope, 23 January 1794; *ibid.*, xxx, 1471-2, Whitbread, 6 March 1794; *ibid.*, xxxii, 174, Fox, 29 October 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 591-2, Fox, 9 December 1795.

¹⁴³ *Considerations on the French War*, pp.45-6; *Strictures on the Overtures of Peace*, pp.27-9; *P.H.*, xxxi, 656, Fox, 30 May 1794. See also *P.H.*, xxx, 1002, Fox, 17 June 1793; *ibid.*, xxxii, 175-6, Fox, 29 October 1795; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1233-7, Holland, 28 January 1800; *ibid.*, 1373-4, Fox, 3 February 1800; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1534, Smith, 28 February 1800; the *Morning Chronicle*, 7, 8, 23, 27 January 1800.

¹⁴⁴ *P.H.*, xxxi, 624, Fox, 30 May 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1244-5, Fox, 26 January 1795.

¹⁴⁵ [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.30; *The Retort Politic on Master Burke*, pp.3-26; *Letters from Simkin the Second*, pp.26-7; John Thelwall, *Sober Reflections on the Seditious and Inflammatory Letter of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, to a Noble Lord. Addressed to the Serious Consideration of his Fellow-Citizens* (London, 1796), pp.4, 37.

¹⁴⁶ *P.H.*, xxxi, 1244-5, Fox, 26 January 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 176-7, Fox, 29 October 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 727, Fox, 15 February 1796; [Broome], *Strictures on Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.17, 41-2; *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, pp.27-8.

concerned were rarely hindered by such scruples from negotiating when it suited them.¹⁴⁷ The object of obtaining Belgium for Austria was considered to be an inadequate reason to break negotiations and continue the war in 1796, especially since it was highly doubtful whether the Emperor would be grateful for the return of the province.¹⁴⁸

The Foxites were sceptical of the government's sincerity in offering to negotiate for peace after December 1795: 'How could we then be so weak as to expect, that a most subtle, insulted, and enraged enemy, would believe what we do not believe ourselves, and what no man of common sense ever did, or to the end of the world will believe?' asked Erskine. Ministers had 'peace in their mouths, while they made preparations for war,' according to Grey. This again seems inconsistent with their anti-war stance and frequent demands for negotiations, and motivated by party. Wilberforce rebuked them for this cavilling in December 1795, arguing that any demonstration of willingness to treat on the part of the government ought to be welcomed.¹⁴⁹ Foxites criticized the administration's strategies in negotiating and in setting up negotiations as calculated to delay and to frustrate the French—the lack of full negotiating powers held by Lord Malmesbury in 1796; his return as the British envoy in 1797, although it was known that the French distrusted him; the use of the title of King of France in referring to Provence; the continual reproaching of France as the initial aggressor. The government was wholly to blame for the rupture of negotiations in November 1796, according to the Foxites; they accepted that the French had broken off the talks in October 1797, but argued that they had been provoked by British behaviour.¹⁵⁰ Ministers were charged with making excuses to carry on a war which kept them in power. Their reasons for not negotiating were all self-generating: they required a stable *enough* government in France, *enough*

¹⁴⁷ BL Add. MSS 47565 ff.10-11, Fox to Grey, 1800; *ibid.*, 47565 ff.34-5, Fox to Grey, 1 December 1800.

¹⁴⁸ *P.H.*, xxii, 1485, 1488-9, Fox, 30 December 1796; Francis, *The Question as it Stood in March 1798*, pp.10-11.

¹⁴⁹ Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, p.92; *P.H.*, xxxii, 716-7, Grey, 15 February 1796; *ibid.*, xxxii, 576, Wilberforce, 9 December 1795. See also *ibid.*, xxxii, 572-4, Sheridan, 9 December 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 593, 597-8, Fox, 9 December 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 606, Lauderdale, 10 December 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 729, Fox, 15 February 1796; the *Morning Chronicle*, 9, 14 December 1795; Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.24.

¹⁵⁰ Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.17; Francis, *The Question as it Stood in March 1798*, pp.12, 14; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.93-4, 96; *Strictures on the Overtures of Peace*, pp.6-7; *P.H.*, xxxii, 1473-4, 1476, Fox, 30 December 1796; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1498-9, Guilford, 30 December 1796; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 178-9, Bedford, 23 March 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 407-15, Fox, 10 April 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 988-9, Sir John Sinclair, 10 November 1797; *ibid.*, xxxiv, 1222-4, Bedford, 28 January 1800; *ibid.*, xxxv, 942-3, Hobhouse, 2 February 1801; the *Morning Chronicle*, 28 October 1796, 3, 4 November 1796, 7, 10 October 1797.

security and *enough* indemnity to give them confidence that a settlement would be adhered to.¹⁵¹

'I am convinced that this ministry cannot make any peace without incredible sacrifices,' wrote Fox in February 1796, privately conceding French as well as British obstinacy. 'The minds of the two Governments are so hostile to each other, and their mutual diffidence so rooted, that it must be next to a miracle, if they can agree till absolute necessity forces them.'¹⁵² Nevertheless, he and his supporters insisted that if peace were to be made, it would be necessary to conciliate the French. Britain must acknowledge the French Republic and restore all its conquests as the price of peace, though some conceded that France should also renounce some of its conquests.¹⁵³ All Britain's conquests should be viewed 'as dust in the balance' compared with the blessings of peace. 'The strong position which France has obtained, and the necessity to which England has reduced herself from the war, must be expected to be felt in the peace,' Erskine warned. Such concessions might disgrace ministers, but they would not humiliate the country.¹⁵⁴ The *Morning Chronicle* of 15 August 1797 argued that the spirit of peace was more important than the details, for terms

are only the pretences for war. The real cause lies in the ambition, in the injustice, in the malignant passions of those to whom the affairs of states are committed....The negotiation for peace becomes a contest for terms. Mr. Pitt has nothing to offer but terms. He must prove that he is sincere by the extent of his concessions; he must purchase the oblivion of his injuries by the magnitude of his compensation.

Along with peace, Opposition writers also demanded the restoration and security of domestic civil liberties, such as the repeal of the acts against seditious meetings, the cessation of the persecution of radicals, a free press, religious toleration and parliamentary reform.¹⁵⁵ It was insisted that peace with France would

¹⁵¹ Vaughan, *Letters on the Concert of Princes*, pp.352-4; *The Evidence Summed Up*, p.34; Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, pp.22-3; Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.94-5; *Strictures on the Overtures of Peace*, pp.24-5; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1226, Bedford, 28 January 1800.

¹⁵² Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 130, Fox to Holland, 18 February 1796.

¹⁵³ *The Evidence Summed Up*, p.35; Wraxall, *The Correspondence Between a Traveller and a Minister of State*, pp.viii-ix; *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, pp.14-17, 35-6; *A Retrospect*, p.23; *P.H.*, xxx, 1405, Lansdowne, 17 February 1794; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1478-83, Fox, 30 December 1796; the *Morning Chronicle*, 9 October 1797.

¹⁵⁴ Erskine, *View of the Causes and Consequences*, pp.107-12, 116, 123-4. See also Wraxall, *The Correspondence Between a Traveller and a Minister of State*, pp.viii-ix; *The Retort Politic on Master Burke*, pp.43-4.

¹⁵⁵ *Considerations on the French War*, p.65; *The Evidence Summed Up*, p.38; *War with France!* p.32; *Thoughts on a Peace with France*, pp.44-5; Stuart, *Peace and Reform*, pp.59-93, 136; Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* p.121; Bigge, *Considerations on the State of Parties*, pp.56-7; *A Retrospect*, pp.27-8.

not produce the adoption of Jacobinism in Britain, since the features of the Revolution which had made Jacobinism feared and hated—its economic levelling, its atheism and its violence—had been too universally condemned to be adopted elsewhere, and because France, after the fall of Robespierre, no longer sought to spread its revolutionary doctrines.¹⁵⁶

On the whole, the Foxites were pleased with the treaty of Amiens. They were delighted that the war had been stopped by an inglorious peace, having achieved none of the objects for which it had been claimed to be fought. 'The Triumph of the French government over the English does in fact afford me a degree of pleasure which it is very difficult to disguise,' Fox told Grey.¹⁵⁷ The navigation of the Scheldt had not been closed again; Savoy, Holland and Belgium had not been rescued from revolutionary France; the government of France had not been restored to a monarchical form; in short, Europe was not 'delivered' from the French Revolution.¹⁵⁸ 'The worse the conduct of the late Ministry the more excusable an inglorious Peace, and Vice Versa,' Fox wrote; 'the approbation of such a Peace as this is the most decided condemnation of them.'¹⁵⁹

In general, therefore, the Foxites sanctimoniously mixed approval of the fact of peace with resignation to such peace terms as had been accepted. As Sheridan summed up, damning the settlement with faint praise:

This, Sir, is a peace which every man ought to be glad of, but no man can be proud of. It is a peace involving a degradation of the national dignity, which no truly English heart can feel with indifference. It was a peace, which the war had a tendency to lead to, as its necessary result. The war was one of the worst wars in which this country was ever engaged: and the peace is, perhaps, as good as any man could make, under the circumstances in which the country was placed.¹⁶⁰

The peace had been made too late to prevent much of the evil of war or much French aggrandizement, but it was better to be made now than later still.¹⁶¹ The Earl of Carnarvon joined disappointed supporters of the war in condemning the terms as wholly inadequate to the safety and glory of Britain. He told the House of Lords that

¹⁵⁶ Workman, *A Letter to the Duke of Portland*, pp.46-75.

¹⁵⁷ BL Add. MSS 47565 ff.51-v., Fox to Grey, 22 October 1801. See also Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 345, Fox to Thomas Maitland, 1801.

¹⁵⁸ William Belsham, *Remarks on the Late Definitive Treaty of Peace, Signed at Amiens* (London, 1802), pp.2-3.

¹⁵⁹ BL Add. MS 47565 f.48v., Fox to Grey, 12 October 1801.

¹⁶⁰ *P.H.*, xxxvi, 17, Sheridan, October 1801. See also *ibid.*, xxxvi, 72, Fox, 3 November 1801.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, xxxvi, 73-82, Fox, 3 November 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 177, Bedford, 3 November 1801; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 666, Jones, 5 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 699-70, Norfolk, 13 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 722, Darnley, 13 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 738, 13 May 1802; *ibid.*, xxxvi, 817-25, Sheridan, 14 May 1802.

'our negotiators [had] ineffectually surrendered the interests of the country'. Lansdowne also had reservations about the concessions Britain had made, and he thought that another war was probable before too long.¹⁶²

IV

In pressing their views on the war, the Foxites relied on a combination of parliamentary opposition and the press, backed by any other support they could persuade. The opposition press was heavily used throughout the decade, although it was never so successful as the conservative press in terms of sheer volume of output and distribution. London newspapers which remained faithful to the Whigs were the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Telegraph*, the *General Advertiser*, the *Gazetteer*, the *Courier* and the *Morning Post*. Parliamentary speeches of Opposition MPs were well circulated—Fox's published speeches and Erskine's pamphlet, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War with France* (1797) sold particularly well, Erskine's *View* going through nine editions in its first week and forty-eight editions altogether.¹⁶³ Opposition pamphlets sometimes replied directly to pro-war tracts, especially those written by Burke, though Daniel Stuart's *Peace and Reform* (1794) was addressed in reply to Arthur Young's *The Example of France a Warning to Britain* (1793), and, not to be outdone in pedantry, the historian William Belsham wrote two pamphlets in point-by-point reply to Herbert Marsh's loyalist accounts of the causes of the war. Like conservative propaganda, opposition publications were designed to reach different levels of readership, ranging from handbills and short, pithy tracts to lengthy, densely argued pamphlets.¹⁶⁴

Opposition writers and MPs often called for the public to make the government aware of their disapproval of the war. The *Morning Chronicle* of 12 January 1793 published a very early call to public action against the war: 'If the people are foolishly supine on this occasion, they may thank themselves for the

¹⁶² Ibid., xxxvi, 188, Carnarvon, 3 November 1801; ibid., xxxvi, 712-7, Carnarvon, 13 May 1802; NMM, DUC/7, Lansdowne to Admiral Sir John Duckworth, 19 October 1801.

¹⁶³ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', pp.50-2, 167; Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', p.275 n.3; J.E. Cookson, *The Friends of Peace. Anti-war Liberalism in England, 1793-1815* (Cambridge, 1982), p.147.

¹⁶⁴ See the 'Cheap Repository Tract'-style dialogue between a deceived wealthy gentleman and a right-thinking mechanic published in the *Morning Chronicle* of 26 September 1793, ostensibly very conservative but subtly subversive, ending with the mechanic putting his social superior right. See also William Belsham, *Remarks on a Late Publication, Styled the History of the Politics of Great Britain & France* (London, 1800); idem., *Reply to the Rev. Herbert Marsh's Vindication of a Late Work, Styled a History of the Politics of Great Britain and France* (London, 1801). For examples of replies to Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, see *The Retort Politic on Master Burke* (1796), *Letters of Simkin the Second* (1796), *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters* (1796).

burdens which must be the inevitable consequence. When the war is once entered into, it will be too late to deprecate its effects.'¹⁶⁵ The Opposition Whigs also cooperated with some activities organized by Friends of Peace. Indeed, the petitions against the war in 1795 and against the 'Two Bills' as part of a malevolent 'war system', and the Addresses to the throne requesting peace and the dismissal of ministers in 1797 were initiated by the Foxites and supported by the liberals locally. 'BRITONS, JUSTIFY IT NOT!' wrote 'Horatius Publicola'. 'UNITE TO SOLICIT AN IMMEDIATE PEACE!' He assured his readers that the King could not neglect so just a petition. Some calls for action were phrased as threats to ministers, motivated more by factious party politics than by a primary desire to stop the war.¹⁶⁶

In Parliament the Foxites were a small but vocal minority—'but though weak, we are right, and that must be our comfort,' Fox told Holland in March 1794.¹⁶⁷ His view of the importance of maintaining a parliamentary opposition—to prevent the 'euthanasia of absolute monarchy'—had shaped his views on the war, and he defended the right of MPs to express 'their loyalty and zeal, by the introduction of topics that must create a difference of opinion' in wartime.¹⁶⁸ They continued to divide Parliament even when they had no chance of defeating Pitt, ostensibly to record their opinions and their efforts to halt the conflict, but also to maintain a sense of party and perhaps to win over some war-weary Pittites.

Yet they were forced to admit the defeat of this tactic. In 1797, Fox and many of his parliamentary supporters seceded from Parliament in protest at their lack of impact on government policy. Whitbread, Tierney and Smith remained at Parliament, attending more regularly than ever and continuing to criticize government war policy; Sheridan often turned up and others drifted back; but Fox himself stayed away until 1801. It was a move he had contemplated as far back as April 1795, and it is hard to resist the conclusion that he enjoyed the privacy he was afforded by the secession.¹⁶⁹ He explained to his supporters in 1800, somewhat

¹⁶⁵ See also *Reasons Against Refusing to Negotiate*, pp.30, 31-4.

¹⁶⁶ Publicola, *The Prospect Before Us!!!* p.110. See also pp. 18-20 above; *Strictures on the Overtures of Peace*, pp.33-4; *A Retrospect*, p.26; the *Morning Chronicle*, 14 January 1793 (on the Common Council of London), 20 September 1793 (on the petition from Glasgow).

¹⁶⁷ Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 71, Fox to Holland, 18 March 1794. Note, however, that Sheridan felt able to use his influence to get the son of a friend a posting on a British warship: 'If ever there was a Lad formed to play the Devil with the French at Sea it is the Bearer James Goddard.' (Price, *Letters of Sheridan*, ii, 12, Sheridan to J.W. Payne).

¹⁶⁸ Fox quotes from Hume on the party system in Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 88-9, Fox to Holland, 5 October 1794. On opposition in wartime, see *P.H.*, xxxi, 93-4, Fox, 25 March 1794; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 20-1, Fox, 3 March 1797; also the *Morning Chronicle*, 7 October 1796.

¹⁶⁹ Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 105-6, Fox to Holland, 12 April 1795. See also *ibid.*, 133, Fox to Holland, 16 September 1796. L.G. Mitchell argues that politics had never been of the first importance to Fox, and that after 1794 he increasingly lost interest in Parliamentary activity and political affairs (*Charles James Fox*, esp. pp.134-5).

disingenuously, that his views appeared to be unacceptable, but that he was too old to change them, and so he would remain in seclusion from Parliament. Erskine assured them that Fox would return to Westminster whenever he thought he had any chance of success.¹⁷⁰ 'Always remember,' Fox told Grey in the same year, on Grey's request that he attend a debate on the Irish union, 'that the original ground of retiring was not the questions likely to be agitated were unimportant, but that our attendance in Parliament upon them was useless, and because useless in some measure hurtful as tending to deceive the country into an opinion that the House of Commons was still a place in which it was worth while to try the effect of argument and reason.'¹⁷¹ Lord Holland thought that the secession was less successful than it might have been because it was not complete and because it was overshadowed almost immediately by the naval mutinies, but that it disconcerted Pitt and deprived him of a lever with the King who could be less easily persuaded that measures were either impossible or necessary because of Parliament.¹⁷²

J.E. Cookson comments that this move, contrary to what might have been expected, set the Whigs back into conventional opposition strategies, firmly based around Westminster and making little effort to exploit popular protests against the war.¹⁷³ Perhaps this was so because Fox was increasingly disillusioned with public willingness to protest against the war and against the government. At the beginning of January 1795, as the petitioning movement gathered momentum, he wrote with some excitement at the prospect of such a show of strength in the country.¹⁷⁴ In November 1795 he thought that the 'higher classes' of British society were disappointingly universal in their support of Pitt's repressive measures, but that he and his party were popular among the lower classes.¹⁷⁵ During the secession, however, he despaired of the public 'spirit'. In 1801 he wrote to Grey: 'till I see that the publick has some dislike (indignation I do not hope for) to absolute power, I see no use in stating in the House of Commons the principles of Liberty and Justice.'¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, as Mitchell points out, his lack of activity and interest almost certainly discouraged others from initiating or supporting anti-war petitions and meetings.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁰ Fox, *The Celebrated Speech...at the Shakespeare Tavern*, pp.18, 20-1.

¹⁷¹ BL Add. MS 47565 f.24, Fox to Grey, 1800. See also *ibid.*, 47569 ff.99-100, Fox to Wilberforce, 21 February 1799, for remarks in a similar vein.

¹⁷² Holland, *Memoirs*, i, 91-2; Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, pp.149-50.

¹⁷³ Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p.162.

¹⁷⁴ BL Add. MSS 47569 ff.54-6, Fox to ?, 2 January 1795.

¹⁷⁵ Russell (ed.), *Memorials*, iii, 126, Fox to Holland, 15/17 November 1795.

¹⁷⁶ BL Add. MS 47565 f.38, Fox to Grey, 1801. See also Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.64.

¹⁷⁷ Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, p.145; see also Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p.197.

From 1792-5 Fox opposed the war in Parliament, for much of this time hoping to persuade the Portland group to rejoin him in opposition to the ministry, which remained more important to him than opposition to the conflict itself. Between 1795-7 this was supplemented by appeals to the country to demonstrate wide hostility to the war. He gave up hope of both in 1797 and, while other Opposition writers and MPs persevered with the anti-war struggle throughout the decade, Fox retired to St. Anne's Hill in sulky retirement until the approach of peace in 1801.

5. The Opposition to the War (II): Radicals and Friends of Peace

If Opposition writers and MPs were hostile to the war largely because they were hostile to William Pitt, radical politicians and the liberal 'Friends of Peace' had different concerns which led them to oppose it no less vehemently, but usually with little or no cooperation from each other or from the Foxites. Radicals opposed it because they were sympathetic to the French Revolution and because they wished to see its doctrines spreading unhindered; they also criticized it for imposing great hardships on many ordinary people. Their arguments were more consistent and less weighed down by opposition for opposition's sake than those of the Foxites, but they also used the war to further their primary concern to demand parliamentary reform and, in particular, the extension of the franchise. The Friends of Peace were the group who most singlemindedly opposed the war itself, both because of moral and religious objections to war in general, and because of the injustice they perceived in the British grounds and conduct of this particular conflict. The opposition to the war within Parliament has been considered in the previous chapter; this chapter expands on anti-war attitudes by examining the views of these extra-parliamentary activists.

I

The radicals were hostile to the conflict against France mainly because they supported the French Revolution. They admired its heroism and defended its purpose:

The People of France had for many centuries groaned under the most horrible despotism that the human imagination can conceive...To overthrow this villainous combination of the FEW against the liberty, property, and happiness of the MANY, in the year 1789, the whole Nation actuated as it were by one general impulse, rose up, 'hurled the Tyrant from his throne', and established the RIGHTS OF MAN.¹

It appalled them to see an attempt to overturn this great triumph, and they ardently supported revolutionary France in its struggle against Austria and Prussia in 1792. Delegates and addresses were sent by radical societies to encourage the National Convention, and clothing, shoes, blankets and ammunition were sent to help the

¹ [Daniel Isaac Eaton], *Extermination, or an Appeal to the People of England on the Present War, with France* (London, 1793), pp.4-6. See also Yang, 'The British Debate on the French Revolution', pp.253-320, *passim*.

'soldiers of Liberty'. The LCS address to the National Convention underlined this support:

Warm as are our wishes for your success, eager as we are to behold Freedom triumphant, and Man everywhere restored to the enjoyment of his just rights, a sense of our duty as orderly Citizens forbids our flying in arms to your assistance; Our government has pledged the National Faith to remain neutral. O shame! But we have entrusted our King with discretionary powers, we must therefore obey. Our hands are bound, but our hearts are free, and they are with you....But the King of Great Britain will do well to remember that this country is not Hanover—should he forget this distinction, we will not.²

Sheffield radicals staged a massive demonstration to celebrate Brunswick's defeat in September, roasting a whole ox, quartering it, and taking it through the town to be given to the poor and the debtors in jail, cheered by a crowd and cannon-fire; and an effigy of the Duke was executed on Kennington Common in London.³ The French victory at Jemappes and Dumouriez's entry into Brussels in November and December 1792 respectively stimulated celebrations in Perth and Dundee.⁴

In the autumn and winter of 1792 the radical societies of Britain grew and multiplied rapidly. The London Corresponding Society, a middle-class and artisan group founded in January 1792, had 295 members by October, 648 by November and about 800 by December. The revived Society for Constitutional Information and the Society of the Friends of the People were supported by men of property who subscribed to reforming or radical views. Some societies were in contact with each other, and 160 delegates representing eighty Scottish societies met in Edinburgh at a 'National Convention' in December 1792.⁵ The reports sent home by French envoys of the Paris National Convention implied that the British government would be unable to oppose the French Republic's strategy in Europe, such was the enthusiasm in Britain for radical opinions, and the myth gained currency in Paris that Britain

² The full address is printed in Albert Goodwin, *The Friends of Liberty: the English Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution* (London, 1979), pp.501-3. See also the addresses of the Friends of the People at Newington and at Aldgate in G.S.Veitch, *The Genesis of Parliamentary Reform* (2nd edition: London, 1965), pp.363-6; and the address of 'The English, Scotch, and Irish resident in Paris' to the National Convention, in J.G. Alger, 'The British Colony in Paris, 1792-3', in the *English Historical Review*, xiii (1898), 673-4.

³ Clive Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution on British Politics and Society', in Crossley and Small, *The French Revolution and British Culture*, p.41; Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.216; Carnall, *Southey*, p.18. See also a handbill 'In the Cause of Liberty' (Stockport, 25 August 1792, and Glasgow, 1792), in PRO HO 42/21/703; and the resolutions of the Warrington Amicable Society for Free Representation and Political Information, 3 November 1792, in PRO HO 42/22/258-60, esp. no.7.

⁴ Kenneth J. Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland, 1780-1815* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp.149-152.

⁵ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.215-7.

was on the verge of a highly successful revolution of its own. To some extent the pre-war optimism of the British radicals themselves supported this view. The *London Chronicle* of 12 November 1792 reported the LCS as having addressed the National Convention with the message: 'Frenchmen, you are already free, but Britons are preparing to be so.' Other declarations to the Convention and the Jacobin Club of Paris assured the French that the British people would not allow their government to go to war. This was not just a deliberate attempt to deceive the French; the Edinburgh radical William Peddie wrote in the same month to a friend, 'I am of opinion with you, that it must end in a Republic. The soldiers will not fight against a Republic, but should they, France will send over 80 000 to help us.' Handbills and pamphlets were published in Britain, arguing against a war against France on the basis of the hardships and misery it would cause.⁶

In fact, however, although much more numerous and well-organized than ever before, British radicals were only a small minority of the population, and were not well co-ordinated. Many societies were quite small and short-lived; Dissenters, Whigs, and working-class societies had very little contact with each other; local issues often preoccupied provincial societies; and few had a degree of hostility to the existing order approaching that of the revolutionaries in France—the great majority called for reform rather than for revolution. The general public alarm of early December stimulated by the government's summoning of Parliament and calling out of the local militia showed how weak the support for radicalism really was in Britain and how ready the population was to rally to the call for loyalism.⁷

When war broke out between Britain and France, the radicals in Britain continued to support the Revolution in France against the allied powers of Europe, which now included Britain. They approved of Jacobinism and defended it throughout the decade in their publications.⁸ Atrocities were explained by the enormity of the cataclysm: 'It could not be expected,' wrote Joseph Towers, 'that so enormous a system of civil, ecclesiastical, and aristocratical tyranny, as that of which the old government was composed, could be so completely overturned,

⁶ On French reports concerning British radicalism, see Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', p.153; Price, *Letters of Sheridan*, 7, Sheridan to Dundas, 9 May 1794. British radical views quoted from the *London Chronicle*, 12 November 1792, cited in Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.14; Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', p.93; PRO HO 102/7, William Peddie to Robert Purvis, 21 November 1792, quoted in Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', p.175. See also *War!* (Sheffield, Nottingham, 20, 31 December 1792); [Ann Jebb], *Two Penny-worth of Truth for a Penny; Or a True State of Facts: With an Apology for Tom Bull in a Letter to Brother John* (London, 1793).

⁷ H.T. Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution 1789-1815* (Oxford, 1985), pp.12-13; Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', pp.169-171, 323-5.

⁸ See, for example, William Fox, *On Jacobinism* (London, 1794); John Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature* (2 vols.: London, 1796).

without very violent convulsions.' William Fox's *Thoughts on the Death of the King of France* (1793) did not condone the execution of Louis XVI, but it argued that it was a totally unjust cause of war. Those who executed him had been simply the last link in a long chain of events, of which the real initiator had been the old government itself, by its injustice and abuse of power.⁹ In the following year he wrote a pamphlet defending and applauding the decree of the National Convention to liberate slaves in the French West Indies. In it, he wrote:

Had the French been left in the undisturbed possession of that Freedom they had so gloriously obtained; had they been suffered quietly to pursue their wise and benevolent principles, little would this, or any of their other measures, have needed a defence from me. Their best and effectual defence, would have been the beneficial effects they would have produced. This was well known by those whose interest it was that those effects never should take place.¹⁰

Thelwall, indeed, tried to question whether there was any link at all between the violence and the Revolution itself. 'If the excesses cannot be proved, either logically or experimentally, to have been connected with the *principles*, coincidence of time is nothing to the purpose, and the one cannot be said to have produced the other.'¹¹ Like opposition writers and MPs, radicals blamed the war on Pitt and the Combined Powers of Europe, and they criticized its counter-revolutionary objects. The radical lecturer at Sheffield on the fast-day of 1794 claimed that the war being waged against France was a kind of spiritual persecution, which often advanced rather than hindered good causes, such as the establishment of Christianity.¹²

⁹ [Joseph Towers], *A Dialogue Between an Associator and a Well-Informed Englishman, on the Grounds of the Late Associations, and the Commencement of a War with France* (London, 1793), pp.22-4; William Fox, *Thoughts on the Death of the King of France* (London, 1793).

¹⁰ William Fox, *A Defence of the Decree of the National Convention of France, for Emancipating the Slaves in the West Indies* (London, 1794), p.8.

¹¹ John Thelwall, *Sober Reflections on the Seditious and Inflammatory Letter of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke, to a Noble Lord. Addressed to the Serious Consideration of his Fellow-Citizens* (London, 1796), p.69, 85-6, 95; [Towers], *A Dialogue*, pp.21-2; [Jebb], *Two Penny-worth of Truth for a Penny*, pp.6-7.

¹² *Fast Day at Sheffield. A Serious Lecture Delivered at Sheffield; February 28, 1794. Being the Day Appointed for A General Fast; to which are added A Hymn and Resolutions* (4th edition: London, 1794), pp.8-9. For other radical writings which argued along the lines of opposition reasoning that the war was an evil crusade waged by Pitt and the continental despots to overturn the French Revolution, see: William Fox, *The Interest of Great Britain, Respecting the French War* (2nd edition: London, 1793 and 5th edition: London, 1793); idem., *Thoughts on the Impending Invasion of England* (London, 1794), p.3; idem., *A Defence of the War Against France* (London, 1794); [Towers], *A Dialogue*, pp.35-43; Joseph Towers, *Remarks on the Conduct, Principles, and Publications, of the Association at the Crown and Anchor, in the Strand, for Preserving Liberty and Property Against Republicans and Levellers* (London, 1793), in *Tracts on Political and Other Subjects, Published at Various Times* (3 vols.: London, 1796), iii, 284; [Mrs. Barbauld], *Reasons for National Penitence, Recommended for the Fast, Appointed February XXVIII, 1794* (London, 1794), pp.9-20; [Eaton], *Extermination*, pp.6-8; John Lovett, H[air].D[resser]. *The Citizen of the World* (London, 1793),

Radicals therefore continued to support the French armies, now fighting against those of their own country. They toasted 'the Armies of Liberty' and used French revolutionary phrases, songs and symbols—*Ça ira*, the *Marseillaise*, trees of liberty, Jacobin oaths, the title of 'citizen' and the denunciation of tyrannical kings. They used the title 'Convention' for the Edinburgh meeting in November - December 1793, and imitated French procedures and terminology in it.¹³ They insisted that the British government ought to recognize the French Republic formally: William Fox argued that denying its existence could not prevent it from existing and that, by making war against it, the government was recognizing it *de facto*.¹⁴ Wordsworth's *The Prelude* recalled his mixed feelings after the French victory at Hondeschoote on 8 September 1793:

Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
Left without glory on the field, or driven,
Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief,—
Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—
A conflict of sensations without name...¹⁵

Robert Southey wrote in October 1799 to Humphry Davy of his joy at continuing French success: 'Massena, Buonaparte, Switzerland, Italy, Holland, Egypt, all at once! the very spring-tide of fortune! It was a dose of gaseous oxide to me, whose powerful delight still endures.'¹⁶

Ministers, according to radicals, exploited the conflict in order to suppress civil liberties in Britain. They believed that they were suffering an English 'reign of

pp.18-21; *The Voice of the People*, &c. (printed for R. Lee), p.5; *Warning to Tyrants* (printed for R. Lee), p.2; *The Rights of Princes* (printed for R. Lee), p.2; *The Blessings of War* (printed for R. Lee), p.4; *A Political Dictionary for the Guinea-Less Pigs, or a Glossary of Emphatical Words Made Use of By That Jewel of a Man, Deep Will in his Administration, and His Plans for Yoking and Putting Rings in the Snouts of those Grumbling Swine, who raise such Horrid Grunting, when Tyrannical Winds Blow High*, pp.8-9; Joseph Gerrald, *A Convention the Only Means of Saving Us From Ruin. In a Letter, Addressed to the People of England* (London, 1793), pp.39-59, 66; John Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature* (2 vols.: London, 1796), ii, 13-31; Thelwall, *Sober Reflections*, pp.51-67; Holcroft, *A Letter to the Right Honourable William Windham, on the Intemperance and Dangerous Tendency of his Public Conduct* (London, 1795), pp.6-7, 33; S.T. Coleridge, 'On the Present War', in *Conciones ad Populum or Addresses to the People* (Bristol, 1795), printed in Patton and Mann (eds.), *Works of Coleridge*, i, 54-8; idem., 'The War Not a Crusade', in the *Morning Post*, 6 August 1800, printed in Erdman (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, iii, 240-2; William Blake, *Europe. A Prophecy* (1794), in Keynes, *Blake*, pp.237-45; 'The Incarnate Devil's Garland, an excellent new song' and 'A New Song. Written by a Dutch Sans Culotte' [1794], both in the Madden Collection, Cambridge University Library.

¹³ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.24.

¹⁴ Fox, *The Interest of Great Britain* (2nd edition), p.16.

¹⁵ Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1850), x, 285-90.

¹⁶ Carnall, *Southey*, p.48.

terror' under Pitt, 'the English Robespierre'.¹⁷ In June 1795 the LCS reprobated the war's sole purpose of annihilating the liberties of France and Britain. Trade and commerce would recover after the war, but, warned Mrs. Barbauld,

the stab, which our liberties have suffered, is not susceptible of so speedy and effectual a remedy. It is the very nature of all arbitrary power to be felt lightly and gently in its first approaches, till by degrees it becomes, instead of an object of delight, and image of terror. The serpent is gathering together its venom, while we are amusing ourselves with its docility and tameness.¹⁸

The radicals at the Sheffield Fast-Day gathering in February 1794 passed resolutions stating that the government's policies of quartering Hessian troops temporarily in Britain and of building barracks around the country were a menace to British liberty: the Hessians might at any time be let loose upon British subjects, and the barracks might be designed to house more foreign mercenaries for the same purpose.¹⁹ Daniel Isaac Eaton reported that a Hessian soldier had stabbed an Englishman in a street quarrel, and inferred that they had all been brought over 'to cut the throats of Englishmen'.²⁰ The LCS resolutions of April 1794 included two against the employment of French *émigrés* in the British armed forces for the same reason, and against impressment into the forces.²¹ Wordsworth and Coleridge reprobated the government's use of spies and informers, and the suspension of habeas corpus.²² John Thelwall saw the violent interruption of his lectures in Yarmouth and elsewhere in 1796 by naval press-gangs as merely a symptom of the malady. Something was rotten in the state of Denmark: 'I cannot but conclude that the brutal conspiracy...originated with higher authorities that the commanders of two or three frigates and sloops of war. The system of terror is still to be supported.'²³

¹⁷ Clive Emsley, 'An Aspect of Pitt's "Terror": Prosecutions for Sedition During the 1790s', *Social History*, vi (1981), 155. At least, said Thelwall, 'the French Robespierre was no apostate' (*Sober Reflections*, p.75). For an example of popular radical complaint about Pitt, see *A Full, True, and Particular Account of the Birth, Parentage and Education, Life, Character and Behaviour of that most notoriously notified Malefactor Willy Pitto* [1790s].

¹⁸ *Account of the Proceedings at a General Meeting of the London Corresponding Society, convened by public advertisement, and held in an inclosed field, behind the Long Room, Borough Road, St. George's Fields, on Monday, the 29th of June, 1795* [London, 1795], p.12 no.3; [Barbauld], *Reasons for National Penitence*, p.32. See also Eaton, *Extermination*, pp.11-16, 28-31; *The Blessings of War*, pp.4-5; Thelwall, *Sober Reflections*, pp.70-4.

¹⁹ *Fast Day as Observed at Sheffield*, p.11, resolutions 4-7.

²⁰ Daniel Isaac Eaton, *Politics for the People*, II:7, 15 March 1794, quoted in Erdman, *Blake*, p.278.

²¹ *P.H.*, xxxi, 492-3.

²² Alan G. Hill (ed.), *Letters of William Wordsworth. A New Selection* (Oxford, 1984), p.17, Wordsworth to William Matthews, 8 June 1794; Coleridge, 'On the Present War', pp.60-2.

²³ John Thelwall, *An Appeal to Popular Opinion, Against Kidnapping & Murder; Including a Narrative of the Late Atrocious Proceedings, at Yarmouth. Second edition, with a Postscript;*

If the continental despots were successful in their war against France, having already crushed the Polish revolution, according to radical commentators, they might next turn upon England, the home of revolutionary ideas through Locke and later political thinkers, including Burke himself. 'England is their native land, here they may be deemed indigenous, in France only exotic, and whether suffered to remain; or whether the hand of violence tears up the new planted offshoot, the mother plant still remains,' explained William Fox.²⁴ Daniel Isaac Eaton also feared such an outcome: 'Then Britons! be assured, that in fighting against France, ye are fighting against yourselves, that if the liberties of France are lost, your own, such as they are, will not long survive.'²⁵

The allied war effort, however, was deemed ultimately hopeless by radical writers. The dreadful power of France had been demonstrated in the first campaign, which had crushed the government's hopes of defeating it quickly. It could not be assumed that Britain would always be victorious by some fixed law of nature. France was never easily subdued, and it had been strengthened immeasurably by the enthusiasm of the people for their new freedom. Britain, marching from defeat to defeat, from rash projects to acute losses, ought to be moved to caution by these repeated warnings, instead of which the government was convinced that the French struggle was the last convulsion of an exhausted state. This, warned Mrs. Barbauld, seemed somewhat wishful and unrealistic in the light of the evidence. Another pamphleteer ridiculed the ministers' conduct of the war: 'We govern this war as an unskilful man does a casting-net, if he has not the right trick to cast the net off his shoulder, the leads will pull him into the river.—I am afraid we shall pull ourselves into destruction.'²⁶ Radicals mocked British and allied military failures.²⁷ The lecturer at the Sheffield Fast-Day in 1794 compared 'the leagued Despots' to the kings who conspired against 'the immortal Joshua': 'yet all could not overcome him, but victories upon victories he gained, and in one campaign not less than thirty-one kings he slew.'²⁸ Even if the allies were to succeed in exterminating every Frenchman, they would find that it was not possible to extinguish opinions. British

containing a Particular Account of the Outrages at Lynn and Wisbeach (London, 1796), pp.6, 52. E.P. Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox'.

²⁴ William Fox, *The Interest of Great Britain*, p.10. See also his *Discourse on National Fasts, Particularly in Reference to that of April 19, 1793, on the Occasion of the War Against France* (3rd edition: London, 1793), pp.8-9; [Towers], *A Dialogue*, pp.19-21.

²⁵ [Eaton], *Extermination*, p.9.

²⁶ Fox, *Thoughts on the Impending Invasion*, pp.3, 6-7, 13; [Barbauld], *Reasons for National Penitence*, p.22; *Mast and Acorns: Collected by Old Hubert* (printed for Daniel Isaac Eaton), p.5.

²⁷ [Eaton], *Extermination*, p.29; [John Still], *Fraternity, Humanity, Peace* (London, 1795), pp.1, 2-3.

²⁸ *Fast Day as Observed at Sheffield*, pp.6, 11. See also *The Blessings of War*, p.2; Gerrald, *A Convention the Only Means of Saving Us from Ruin*, pp.63-5; [Eaton], *Extermination*, pp.17-18.

ministers ought to have learned the lesson from the American War, said Coleridge, that 'a war against a nation of patriots must be as unsuccessful and calamitous, as it is iniquitous and abominable; that rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God; and that they therefore who struggle for freedom fight beneath the banners of omnipotence.'²⁹

The government was further castigated for the war by the radicals because of its expense and its adverse effects on trade and living standards. 'Whence are we to derive any compensation for the increase of taxes, the loss of trade, and the decay of our manufactures?' asked Joseph Towers.³⁰ The Birmingham Corresponding Society told the Society for Constitutional Information in November 1793 that 'Mr. Pitt's "War of Humanity"' had 'almost utterly annihilated our Trade in the Town'.³¹ Daniel Isaac Eaton was indignant that 'such enormous subscriptions' had been raised for the French *émigrés* 'at a time when an immense body of our own Poor are absolutely starving'; but, he added sarcastically, 'the Poor of England are not *Noble!!!*' Joseph Gerrald criticized the government for squandering the increased revenue from war taxation on three new boards (for India, agriculture and exchequer bills) while industry was crippled.³² Thomas Holcroft condemned Windham for his refusal to believe that the poor felt any hardship from the war. Windham had ignored the slaughter and bereavement of war, the unemployment, low wages, high prices, high taxes and high poor relief contributions. In times so full of terror and dismay, Holcroft asked, 'will men suffer to be told that the war is not felt? Is it possible that a perversion of truth and reason so incredible as this can be real?'³³ 'Famine' was unknown, wrote one pamphleteer, where there was no war, for nature was never so severe as to refuse to supply people's real needs. He linked this with Pitt's decision in 1793 to forbid the export of corn to France and concluded that he was attempting to starve both France and Britain into submission.³⁴ Coleridge reprobated Arthur

²⁹ Fox, *Defence of the War*, pp.11-16; S.T. Coleridge, 'All for the Best', in the *Morning Post*, 19 April 1796, printed in Erdman (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, iii, 241-2.

³⁰ [Towers], *A Dialogue*, p.47. See also *A Political Dictionary for the Guinea-Less Pigs*, pp.9-10; *The Address of the British Convention, Assembled at Edinburgh, November 19, 1793, to the People of Great Britain* (London, 1793), pp.22-3; the Address of the LCS on 20 January 1794, in *P.H.*, xxxi, 481; Coleridge, 'On the Present War', pp.59-60, 68-70.

³¹ Quoted in Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.30.

³² [Eaton], *Extermination*, p.12 n.; Gerrald, *A Convention the Only Means of Saving Us From Ruin*, pp.62-3.

³³ Holcroft, *Letter to Windham*, pp.38-41. For Windham's remark in the House of Commons, see p.85.

³⁴ *The Wrongs of Man* (printed for R. Lee), pp.2-3. See also [Richard Lee], *The Rights of Swine. An Address to the Poor* (London, [1795]), pp.1-2; *An Address to the English Nation: with a Slight Sketch of the Existing Grievances, and a Recommendation to Petition with Vigour, as a Means of Obtaining a Repeal of Pitt and Grenville's Bills* (London, 1796), pp.6-7; *A Political Dictionary for the Guinea-Less Pigs*, pp.12-13.

Young's opinion that the scarcity was a mark of divine chastening on the nation rather than a direct result of an unjust and unnecessary war.³⁵

War was, to radicals, a game for kings, princes and their ministers and one that ruined ordinary people. 'Despots delight in war, to them 'tis sport, A Royal Game—their subjects lives the stake.' War was fought, according to 'John Lovett, Hair Dresser', 'to have thousands, and tens of thousands, of the subjects of this country put to death, and all for the pride and etiquette of courts.' Courtiers, said the Sheffield lecturer, delighted in children's toys (ribbons, stars and garters) and nicknames (titles). One pamphleteer suspected that the government had entered the conflict simply because the Duke of York, 'anxious to make a splendid parade of his *great military talents*', had cried out for a war. Joseph Gerrald surveyed the wars of the eighteenth century to show that 'they might have been avoided by negotiation, instead of being decided by arms; that they arose, not from the jarring interests of two peoples, but from the ambition and avarice of courts, and, that at the end of each war, the situation of the people was always much worse than at the beginning of it.'³⁶ *The Blessings of War*, one of the selections of 'Extracts from Pigott's Political Dictionary' printed for Richard Lee, bitterly defined 'Life' as 'a state of existence to be sacrificed by the *lower* orders of society whenever kings and ministers think proper—witness the reeking plains of Flanders.'³⁷ Radicals lamented the degeneration of the British people towards 'slavery'. Coleridge printed in the *Morning Post* of 11 April 1796 two Remonstrances from Wilkes and the City of London to the King in 1775 against the 'tyrannical measures' pursued against America, and asked 'Where has the spirit of the Citizens of London fled, and why do they not NOW address the Throne in similar language?'³⁸

Sometimes these sentiments could be phrased as direct condemnation of the King or even threats addressed to him. William Fox was anxious to explain that he did not question the King's prerogative to make war, but that he wished to discuss

³⁵ S.T. Coleridge, 'Review of a Pamphlet by Arthur Young Entitled "The Question of Scarcity Plainly Stated"', in the *Morning Post*, 27 March 1800, printed in Erdman (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, iii, 238.

³⁶ *The Blessings of War*, p.2; Lovett, *The Citizen of the World*, p.9; *Fast Day as Observed at Sheffield*, p.4; *The Rights of Princes*, p.7; Gerrald, *A Convention the Only Means of Saving Us From Ruin*, pp.7-8, 8-38; Thomas Bentley, *A Warning to Britons of All Ranks; Especially the King, the Parliament, and the Clergy* (6th edition: London, 1794).

³⁷ *The Blessings of War*, p.3. See also *A Political Dictionary for the Guinea-Less Pigs*, p.7; *An Address to the English Nation*, pp.6-7; *French Famine* (1795); Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature*, ii, 8-11; S.T. Coleridge, *Fire, Famine, and Slaughter. A War Eclogue* (1796); 'The Age of War', in the *Courier*, 8 Nov. 1798, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, p.215.

³⁸ S.T. Coleridge, in the *Morning Post*, 11 April 1796, printed in Erdman (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, iii, 205-8. See also Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature*, ii, 6-7; *Mast and Acorns*, p.7; [Still], *Fraternity, Humanity, Peace*, p.2.

the effects of the present war, including the possibility that the King might never be able to involve Britain in another war after it. The *Union Star*, a Dublin news-sheet, was less reverent: 'Are the continental wars you engender and provoke to destroy mankind, no wrong?' it asked George III. In *The Song of Los*, Blake blamed the King as the villain whose policy resulted in 'famine from the heath'. Sometimes the King himself was protected from direct attack in radical publications by the use of the 'evil ministers' argument; but his coach was physically attacked while he travelled to open Parliament on 29 October 1795, and it had to be bullet-proofed for the following year.³⁹

Yet the radicals opposed the war not just as a symptom of political corruption and injustice, but also as an evil in itself. They insisted that there was no such thing as 'natural enemies' and, as Richard Price had done in his 1790 *Discourse on the Love of Our Country*, they extolled the virtues of universal brotherhood.⁴⁰ 'The wolf is the *natural enemy* of the lamb; the vulture of the dove', explained one pamphlet. '*By instinct they are so. They must live*; but one people can never be the *natural enemy of another*, unless we consider mankind in the same savage light as the vulture and the wolf.' A nation was just one member of the family of the human race, and it could flourish only within the harmony and welfare of the whole. War was 'altogether a solecism in commercial politics' especially; it was also 'unworthy of rational Beings, and utterly repugnant to...the Christian Religion'.⁴¹ It was particularly odious when it was waged against opinions; it was persecution and, as such, detestable. This was particularly significant to British radicals, who believed that they along with the French revolutionaries were being persecuted for their opinions by the British government.⁴² It could not be a means of justice, according to Thelwall, since might was not necessarily right: it was rather a means of revenge, desolation, conquest, ambition, plunder, corruption, murder and oppression.⁴³

Since warfare was evil, soldiering was an evil profession and likened to a butcher's trade in human beings. 'Soldiers have no privileges, no rights, no feelings of humanity to guide them to action, no sentiment of regard for their fellow-men!

³⁹ Fox, *Thoughts on the Impending Invasion*, p.3; the *Union Star*, no.1, undated, quoted in Morris, 'Monarchy as an Issue', pp.178-9; *ibid.*, pp.113-4, 152-3; Blake, *The Song of Los* (1795), 6:9, 15-22, in Keynes, *Blake*, p.247; *A Letter from a Chancellor, Out of Office, to a King in Power* (London, 1795); Roger Wells, 'English Society and Revolutionary Politics in the 1790s: the case for insurrection', in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, p.189.

⁴⁰ Richard Price, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (London, 1790), esp. pp.2-9.

⁴¹ *The Voice of the People*, pp.2-3; *Fast Day as Observed at Sheffield*, pp.7, 11:1.

⁴² Thelwall, *Rights of Nature*, i, 67, 86.

⁴³ Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature*, ii, 7-8. See also Holcroft, *Letter to Windham*, pp.32-3.

They are a distinct order, kept apart, that all sensibility, all sympathy for the sufferings of others with them may be extinct.’⁴⁴ Southey wrote of a soldier as a man made in the image of God, but moulded by his life of labour into ‘a mere machine of murder’. He had less sympathy for their officers. On hearing in 1796 that a friend of his had become a soldier, he wrote that military officers ‘are the most ignorant impertinent and debauched members of this execrable state of society.’⁴⁵

Nevertheless, despite their harsh words for the soldiers’ profession, radicals pitied them as ordinary men who had been bribed or forced into a dangerous position. Like the Foxite opposition, the radicals criticized the government’s conduct of the war, but they did this more consistently with their hostility to the war than the Foxites did. Much of their anti-war protest was based on its effects on ordinary poor people, and their main specific criticism related to individual policies which inflicted hardship on these people: in particular, the treatment of soldiers. Perhaps, since most general sympathy went to sailors rather than soldiers, the radicals were consciously supporting the underdog at the same time as condemning his profession: hating the sin but loving the sinner. Coleridge published excerpts from soldiers’ accounts of campaigning life in *The Watchman*, emphasizing the misery of cold and danger, fever, inept and corrupt medical staff, Austrian atrocities and allied plundering.⁴⁶ Better conditions were demanded for soldiers, especially after demobilization.⁴⁷ The system of recruitment by crimps and the press-gang, and their methods of promising glamour, offering bribery, promoting alcoholism and resorting to kidnapping, were all condemned.⁴⁸ Radicals were also convinced that sailors were not necessarily so loyal to the government as conservatives claimed. John Gale Jones claimed to have spoken to a naval officer, who had told him that sailors were motivated more by the sense of danger or fear of punishment than by loyalty, that for them it was only a job and that they did not think about the justice of the cause in which they fought. The Navy to them was not ‘the wooden walls of Britain’, but

⁴⁴ *Mast and Acorns*, p.13; quotation from *The Blessings of War*, pp.5, 6-8; Morris, ‘The Monarchy as an Issue’, p.160.

⁴⁵ Robert Southey, ‘The Soldier’s Funeral’, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.231-2; 25 September 1796, quoted in Carnall, *Southey*, p.38. See also his poem, ‘The Battle of Blenheim’ (1798), printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.245-7.

⁴⁶ Coleridge, ‘Interesting Narration relative to the Campaign of 1794 and 1795’, and ‘Farther Particulars Relating to the Campaign of 1794 and 1795’ in the *Watchman*, 19 and 27 April 1796, printed in Patton (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, ii, 238-41, 282-4. See also Robert Merry, ‘The Wounded Soldier’, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.242-5.

⁴⁷ *The Blessings of War*, p.5; [Still], *Fraternity, Humanity, Peace*, p.1; *Ask, and You Shall Have, or, The Source of Public Grievances and Their Remedies Pointed Out* (London), p.3; *Revolutions without Bloodshed; or, Reformation Preferable to Revolt* (London, 1794), p.3.

⁴⁸ *The Wrongs of Man*, p.7; *The Blessings of War*, pp.3, 5; *Revolutions without Bloodshed*, p.3; Thelwall, *An Appeal to Popular Opinion*; PRO HO 42/37/129, report on Thelwall’s lectures, 25 October 1795.

a floating hell, consisting of an assembly of huge, unwieldy, wooden castles, well stored with artillery, gun-powder, chain shot, cannon balls, grape shot, bombs, hand grenades, slugs, leaden bullets, sharp-angled pieces of iron, flints, glass, old rusty nails, salt-petre, brimstone, combustible cannisters, and every engine of destruction that will do execution. Most of the sailors who conduct and manage these useful machines, are torn in force from their wives and families, to assist monarchs in executing this only and universal object of their whole lives, viz. the extermination of the human species.⁴⁹

The government was also criticized by radicals for its appointment of public Fast Days. Morality ought not to be conflated with wicked governmental interest. The idea of the rich fasting was ridiculed, and it was pointed out that many of the poor fasted of necessity and not as a religious observance.⁵⁰ A fast, remarked Coleridge, was made up of 'Prayers of Hate to the God of Love—and after these, a Turbot Feast for the rich, and their usual scanty morsel to the poor, if indeed debarred from their usual labour they can procure even this.'⁵¹ Radicals constantly demanded peace, and they questioned whether ministers were sincerely working towards it.⁵² The LCS general meeting in June 1795 petitioned the King:

We conjure you, Sire...to put an immediate period to the ravages of a cruel and destructive war, and to restore to us that Peace and Tranquillity, which is so essentially necessary for YOUR OWN PERSONAL SECURITY, AND FOR THE HAPPINESS OF THE PEOPLE!⁵³

⁴⁹ John Gale Jones, *A Sketch of a Political Tour* (London, 1796), quoted in Morris, 'Monarchy as an Issue', pp.169-70.

⁵⁰ Fox, *A Discourse on National Fasts*, pp.1-3, 6, 15; idem., *A Discourse, Occasioned by the National Fast, February 28, 1794* (London, 1794), pp.12-16; Bentley, *A Warning to Britons of all Ranks*; idem., *Seasonable Advice to all People of Power, or wealth* (London, 1793); [Mrs. Barbauld], *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation; or, A Discourse for the Fast, Appointed on April 19, 1793. By a Volunteer* (2nd edition: London, 1793); [Barbauld], *Reasons for National Penitence; Fast Day as Observed at Sheffield*, pp.5, 10-11, 11:3, 12; Polemophilus Brown, *A Sermon, Preached on the Day of General Fast, February 27, 1799* (1799); Coleridge, 'Essay on Fasts', in the *Watchman*, 9 March 1796, printed in Patton (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, ii, 51-6; 'Verses On Seeing the Military Association Going to Church on the Fast-Day in their Uniform', in the *Courier*, 14 March 1799, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, p.236; 'Song on the General Fast' (1795), in the Madden Collection, Cambridge University Library.

⁵¹ Coleridge, 'On the Present War', pp.65-7.

⁵² William Fox, *On Peace* (London, 1794); Towers, *A Dialogue*, p.38; idem., *Remarks on the Conduct of the Association*, p.284; [Barbauld], *Reasons for National Penitence*, pp.25-8; *The Rights of Man* (printed for R. Lee), pp.4-5; *The Address of the British Convention*, p.23; S.T. Coleridge, 'Review of the Motions in the Legislature for a Peace with France', and 'Copy of a Hand-Bill', in the *Watchman*, 1 March 1796, printed in Patton (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, ii, 16-22, 47-8.

⁵³ *Account of the Proceedings at a General Meeting of the London Corresponding Society...on Monday, the 29th of June, 1795*, p.10.

The objects of the war had either already been gained or were impossible to accomplish;⁵⁴ and there was no excuse for not negotiating.⁵⁵

The radical movement ebbed and flowed between 1792 and 1795. After its first high-tide in 1792, the alarm during the winter 1792-3, the rise of the loyalists and the outbreak of war pushed it back into caution and relative quiet.⁵⁶ Some radicals emigrated to America; the membership of the popular societies declined, and some disappeared altogether; likewise, there was a fall in the circulation of radical publications, and some of their newspapers closed.⁵⁷ By the autumn of 1793, however, the ebb-tide began to flow again. The LCS held a mass meeting at Hackney in October, and Thelwall began to hold his first public lectures. The first British Convention was held in Edinburgh in November and December and, despite its closure by the authorities, radicals seemed to gain courage in the face of repression. The Scottish sedition trials of 1793-4 resulted in the conviction of Muir, Fyssh Palmer, Skirving, Margarot and Gerrald, but the English treason trials of 1794 acquitted Hardy, Horne Tooke, Holcroft, Thelwall and others.⁵⁸ The arrest of these men and the convictions and transportations obtained in Scotland subdued the societies again; yet, in 1795, grain shortages and high prices encouraged a new wave of radical action. John Gale Jones, John Binns and Francis Place were prominent in the LCS, which held further 'monster meetings', and Thelwall resumed his lecture tours. The 'Two Acts' of December 1795, however, while hardly implemented, had a marked effect on radical activities in terms of their restrictions on meetings and publications, and the popular radical movement was gradually suppressed or driven underground for the rest of the decade.⁵⁹

Nevertheless, the LCS still had a membership at the end of 1796 a third greater than it had had in 1793, and Clive Emsley remarks that 'its general correspondence, its ambitious ventures, and the spies' reports of 1796 do not suggest an organisation in a state of collapse or despair.' Parish meetings were exempt from

⁵⁴ S.T. Coleridge, 'The War', in the *Watchman*, 17 March 1796 (taken from the *Morning Post*, 9 March 1796), printed in Patton, *Works of Coleridge*, ii, 108-9; Fox, *On Peace*, pp.1-2.

⁵⁵ Gerrald, *A Convention the Only Means*, pp.67-9; S.T. Coleridge, articles in the *Morning Post*, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 22, 25 January 1800, printed in Erdman (ed.), *Works of Coleridge*, iii, 64-8, 73-91, 114-7, 125-130.

⁵⁶ This relative quiescence, however, masked continued subversion, such as the use of loyal Associations to profess loyalty but urge reform—see Donald Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement of 1792-93 and British Public Opinion', *Historical Journal*, ix (1966), 179-90.

⁵⁷ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.392. See also Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, pp.89-102.

⁵⁸ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.393-7; Dickinson, *British Radicalism*, pp.21-2, 38.

⁵⁹ Clive Emsley, 'Repression, "Terror", and the Rule of Law in England During the Decade of the French Revolution', *English Historical Review*, 100 (1985), 813.

the terms of the Seditious Meetings Act, and some radicals used those.⁶⁰ Some United Scotsmen were arrested in late 1797, some United Englishmen in Manchester and some divisions of the LCS in April 1798, and, in October 1799, a group of men in Margate trying to sail for France, who included John Binns and Arthur O'Connor. Father James Quigley was also among them, carrying a letter to the French Directory, encouraging invasion; he was convicted of treason and executed.⁶¹ John Thelwall warned in 1796 that, despite a cowed appearance, the radical movement, or 'the manly spirit of Britain', 'is not dead but sleepeth', and that should it be provoked by further tyrannical outrages, either the old champions of the cause would 'resume their neglected arms', or others would step forward to take their place.⁶² Against this must be balanced those who, like Wordsworth and Coleridge, reluctantly stopped opposing the war after the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte. The radicals' reactions to the peace of Amiens in 1802 was probably mixed: the war had ceased, but they had suffered a decade of hounding and suppression. Thomas Hardy wrote to Napoleon in 1802, 'Now peace reigns on earth and this is the work of Frenchmen.'⁶³

The anti-war activities of the radicals centred on trying to rouse and use popular discontent. Indeed, their anti-war activism was simply another strand of their reformist strategy. They used food riots, probably not in the way that anxious conservatives imagined—by hoarding grain to force disturbances—but at least to stir people up and to impress public opinion with a sense of discontent.⁶⁴ In a similar manner, they sought to make political capital out of public war-weariness and hostility to the war. Poverty, unemployment, crimping and pressing, and food shortages were the main grounds on which they opposed the war in publications after 1793, and it is accepted that 'throughout the 1790s, but particularly in the years 1792-6, distress was a major recruiting agent for the radical cause'.⁶⁵ The British radical movement was small and without political power, so it had to depend on the moral force of public opinion. Since the war was an almost universal experience, it

⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 812-3.

⁶¹ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.68.

⁶² Thelwall, *Sober Reflections*, p.10. See also Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform', pp.74-5.

⁶³ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.92.

⁶⁴ Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution', pp.47-8; Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.171.

⁶⁵ Dickinson, *British Radicalism*, p.9. See also Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, pp.92-3; and Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots', 40-58, on the radicals' exploitation of existing discontent due military recruitment. David Eastwood rightly notes, however, that the radicals did not succeed in sufficiently politicizing poverty to threaten the conservative order seriously, partly because of conservative counteraction in the form of substantially higher poor rates (Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State', pp.162-3; c.f. Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, pp.59-60, 201).

helped the radicals, as Mark Philp suggests, to develop a language of protest that was widely understood.⁶⁶ Sometimes these demands became conflated by rioting crowds or bill-posters, so that they cried for peace and bread 'or a King without a head'.⁶⁷ The *Annual Register* for 1797 shows that in March 1797, 'most of the counties, cities and towns of the kingdom petitioned his Majesty for the removal of ministers, and the consequent restoration of peace'. In the same month, the LCS sent a circular to its provincial correspondents, proposing simultaneous nationwide meetings to call for these same demands. One was held in Nottingham, but the London meeting, in July, was closed by the Bow Street magistrates.⁶⁸

Some radicals used the war as a direct means of demonstrating the *de facto* involvement of the people in government policy and urging their active participation in making that policy. Mrs. Barbauld's pamphlets on Fast Days made the connection between national guilt and the responsibility of each individual in the nation for the deeds of the nation. William Williams made a similar point. When their British ancestors put the power of making war and peace in the hands of their executive government, he explained, it was a delegation of trust, not an absolute authority conferred, because the people themselves bore the burden of blood and money required. Therefore, 'the people are competent to judge. Ministers should fairly state the whole case to them, they have then done their duty; and, be the result what it may, they are blameless.' Government ought to be participated in by all. The LCS boasted at its mass general meeting of June 1795 that the British people were beginning to rouse themselves and would refuse to allow 'an insolent Administration' to continue in its corruption and slaughter. It warned them, however, 'not to fall into those fatal errors which have so frequently misled our ancestors, nor rest your expectation on that delusive phantom—a Change of Ministers!...YOUR CHIEF, PERHAPS YOUR ONLY HOPE, IS IN YOURSELVES!'⁶⁹ Coleridge argued that, in such a time of national crisis, 'every

⁶⁶ Mark Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform', in Philp, *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp.62, 66, 89.

⁶⁷ Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution', p.53; see also Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.92.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.50; *idem.*, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.63.

⁶⁹ [Barbauld], *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation*; [*idem.*], *Reasons for National Penitence*, esp. pp.5-6; Williams, *A Reply to Mr. Burke's Two Letters*, p.49; *Account of the Proceedings at a General Meeting of the London Corresponding Society...on Monday, the 29th of June, 1795*, pp.5-7. See also Gerrald, *A Convention the Only Means of Saving Us From Ruin*, pp.1-4, 71-116; Thelwall, *The Rights of Nature*, i, 3-6, 13-45; *idem.*, *Sober Reflections*, pp.26-7.

one ought to consider his intellectual faculties as in a state of requisition', for 'all may benefit society in some degree' in this way.⁷⁰

Some radical pamphlets and meetings applauded the efforts of the Foxites in Parliament for 'supporting the public in opposing the war.'⁷¹ Others criticized them roundly for merely charging the ministry with a feeble prosecution of the war, instead of refusing to cooperate with voting for supplies, and demanded that they secede, instead of laying themselves open to the accusation of guilt by association.⁷² The press was also used by radicals to give voice to anti-war sentiments. The *Analytical Review*, the *Monthly Review* and the *Critical Review* were radical periodicals, contributed to by Mary Wollstonecraft, William Blake, William Godwin and Thomas Paine, among others.⁷³ Gayle Trusdel Pendleton argues that, with regard to pamphlet literature, radicals seem to have made less effort than conservative propagandists to cater for the market at the lower end of the social scale. Mark Philp claims that this is relative, for their publications were more accessible to a mass audience than ever before.⁷⁴ In terms of the war debate, it seems probable that, while there were some radical handbills, posters and pamphlets aimed directly at the lower orders, they relied more on stirring up existing discontent by word of mouth, personal activism, demonstrations, petitions and meetings. Sometimes radicals went so far as to try to persuade soldiers to their political views—Edinburgh radicals were arrested in autumn 1792 for distributing seditious medals to soldiers, it was widely believed that radicals had a hand in instigating the naval mutinies of 1797, and a young man was hanged in Bolton in September 1801 for trying to seduce two dragoons from their duty.⁷⁵

Radicals had traditionally assumed the character of 'true' patriots, associating themselves with the mythical history of Anglo-Saxon freedom and a Norman oppression continued still by the present governors of Britain. A handbill published in Sheffield and Nottingham in December 1792 arguing against going to war was signed 'Sydney', associating itself with the seventeenth-century radical Algernon Sydney and the radical interpretation of the Glorious Revolution which Burke's *Reflections* had been at pains to refute—that of the triumph of the

⁷⁰ S.T. Coleridge, 'A Moral and Political Lecture' (1795), in Patton and Mann (eds.), *Works of Coleridge*, i, 5.

⁷¹ Lovett, *Citizen of the World*, pp.16-17, 32; *Fast Day as Observed at Sheffield*, p.11: 8, 9.

⁷² Gerrald, *A Convention the Only Means of Saving Us from Ruin*, pp.118-9.

⁷³ de Montluzin, *The Anti-Jacobins*, p.2.

⁷⁴ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.164; Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform', p.70. For examples of radical anti-war handbills, posters, etc. found in Norwich in 1793, see PRO HO 42/27/174-92, Joseph White to Evan Nepean, 16 November 1793.

⁷⁵ Murley, 'Origin and Outbreak', p.177; Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.143.

sovereignty of the British people over their governors.⁷⁶ During the war, radicals continued to appropriate this character. Mrs. Barbauld inveighed against 'a species of patriotism, which consists in inverting the natural course of our feelings, in being afraid of our neighbour's prosperity, and rejoicing at his misfortunes. We should be ashamed to say,' she insisted, '...our neighbours are weakening themselves by a cruel war, we shall rise upon their ruins.'⁷⁷ Another pamphleteer argued that people should be ready to understand the cause of other nations and acknowledge their own defects.⁷⁸

The radicals lost support, however, because they had gained a pro-French and therefore anti-British image. This was, of course, principally because Britain was at war with France, and radicals supporting France appeared to be anti-patriotic, but it was ironic that, as Gerald Newman points out, their patriotic label had been gained earlier in the century by their denunciations of aristocratic imitation of French fashions and their consequent anti-French associations. Clearly, their anger had always been directed against the élite, just as it was now in their opposition towards war against the anti-aristocratic French Revolution, but the superficial message of anti-France had suddenly become pro-France, and it was a severe handicap to their success in Britain.⁷⁹ Their tendency to alternate between republican rhetoric, in support of the French revolutionaries, and declarations supporting the British monarchy, which reflected their reforming background and, probably, the actual views of most radicals in Britain, produced understandable confusion among loyalists as to their real intentions.⁸⁰ They claimed, however, that conservatives deliberately distorted their case.⁸¹ As Gregory Claeys argues, they were now associated with 'an economic programme which threatened the progress of the commerce and polished manners which had exalted Britain.'⁸²

Radicals had mixed feelings about a possible French invasion. Often their rhetoric seemed to look forward to such an event, but it is unlikely that many would have supported it in reality. The *Sheffield Iris* was unsympathetic to the French

⁷⁶ *War!* (Nottingham, 31 December 1792; Sheffield, 20 December 1792 in PRO HO 42/23/633). See also 'To the Inhabitants of Nottingham', signed 'Hampden', in the British Library collection of songs and broadsides at 648.c.26.

⁷⁷ [Barbauld], *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation*; pp.22-3. See also Eaton, *Extermination*, pp.19-23; *Address of the British Convention*, pp.5-12.

⁷⁸ *The History of a Good Bramin. To Which is Annexed, an Essay on the Reciprocal Contempt of Nations, Proceeding from their Vanity* (printed for Daniel Isaac Eaton: London, 1795), pp.7, 10, 15.

⁷⁹ Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, pp.230-1.

⁸⁰ Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', p.89.

⁸¹ See, for example, [Towers], *A Dialogue*, p.14; *The Blessings of War*, p.1; Blake, 'Europe. A Prophecy', 12:26-31, in Keynes, *Blake*, p.243.

⁸² Claeys, 'The French Revolution Debate and British Political Thought', 61, 74-5. See also Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism', pp.41-2; Murley, 'Origin and Outbreak', pp.vii-viii.

forces. The meeting of the LCS broken up by Bow Street Magistrates on 19 April had been discussing what they should do if the French landed; many thought they ought to help the Volunteers, and one prominent member was reported as having argued that the Society should help to repel them, because they seemed 'more desirous of establishing an extensive military despotism, than of propagating republican principles'.⁸³ On the other hand, Gilbert Wakefield and others warned the government that invasion would not pose the French with much of a problem. John Gale Jones, on the day the Two Acts were passed, said that, in the present circumstances, 'should the French invade our Coasts, I would not take up a Musket to oppose them. I would not assist the French to invade this Country, nor would I resist them; for if I am to be a Slave, it matters not whether I be the slave of an English, or of a French Tyrant.'⁸⁴ Others, particularly the United Irishmen, but also some radicals in the large towns and cities of the mainland, were ready to join the French and were impatient for their arrival.⁸⁵

While the radicals often called for an end to the war, chiefly because of their support for the French Revolution, but mainly based on the grounds of the hardships it caused the labouring poor, their primary aim remained political reform. The resolutions taken by the Sheffield radicals in February 1794 began by denouncing the war, but ended by declaring that 'the People have no remedy for their Grievances, but a REFORM IN PARLIAMENT—a Measure which we determine never to relinquish, though we follow our Brethren in the same Glorious Cause in BOTANY BAY.' If the British constitution really was the envy of the world and the masterpiece and model of liberty, or even halfway there, argued Joseph Towers, a war would not be necessary to defend it against attack. The resolutions adopted by the LCS on 29 June 1795 at St. George's Fields demonstrated that, although 'the Friends of Reform [were] indeed the Friends of Peace', the war to the radicals was just one of the many distresses brought upon the people by a corrupt government, if a major one, and that it was only likely to be halted by parliamentary reform, the panacea for all these ills.⁸⁶

⁸³ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.68-9; idem., 'The Impact of the French Revolution', p.55.

⁸⁴ Gilbert Wakefield, *A Reply to the Bishop of Llandaff* (1798), quoted in Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.69-70; Fox, *Thoughts on the Impending Invasion*, pp.12-16; PRO HO 42/37/454, John Gale Jones, 18 December 1795. See also Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.191.

⁸⁵ See, for example, PRO HO 42/40/325, possibly an oath of the United Englishmen, swearing 'as far as in me lies...to assist the French in landing to free this country'.

⁸⁶ *Fast Day as Observed at Sheffield*, p.11 no.11; Towers, *Remarks on the Conduct of the Association*, p.288; *Account of the Proceedings at a General Meeting of the LCS*, pp.12 nos.1-3, pp.13-14. See also *An Address to the English Nation; Revolutions without Bloodshed; or, Reformation Preferable to Revolt* (London, 1794); *Ask and You Shall Have*, p.1; copy of a speech

Ultimately, radical activists were more concerned with making war on political 'tyranny' in Britain than with opposing the government's war against France. They began by opposing the war out of sympathy for the French Revolution and in the context of their hostility to conservative ideology, but their interest in it became more instrumental as time passed and as their opportunities to persuade people of their views on it became more limited, with government restrictions on their activities. The 'Friends of Peace', on the other hand, opposed the government chiefly because they opposed the war against revolutionary France.

II

The 'Friends of Peace' were a group of liberal men spread throughout the country and, although they were not a formally constituted body, they had formed a network over previous years by their association in opposing various issues such as clerical subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, the Test and Corporation Acts, the American War and the slave trade, and by ties of family, friendship, religion, intellect, profession and business. Based mainly in London and in the north of England, but with contacts nationwide, they formed the real leadership of the anti-war protest. Many of them were Dissenters, hostile to what they saw as a Pittite 'Tory' high-church party, although some were liberal Anglicans; most were 'rational Christians', stressing the importance of the mind, reasoning and human potential above faith, emotion and human sinfulness, but Evangelicals were also involved. They supported the parliamentary Opposition Whigs, but while the link was strengthened by bonds of friendship and obligation, it was strained by the suspicion of the Friends of Peace that the liberalism of the Whig MPs was superficial. They opposed the war from two main standpoints: on grounds of morality and religion they opposed war in general, and they had specific ideological and practical objections to this conflict against France in particular.⁸⁷

Various supporters of Pitt joined the liberal protest against the war at one point or another. William Smith has already been mentioned as one who changed to consistent and ardent support of Fox because of the war, and the Duke of Grafton did the same.⁸⁸ William Wilberforce, the slave trade abolitionist, was a more celebrated example. A close friend of Pitt, he refused to join the Foxites in their

given by the radical James Besey at Sandringham on 19 October 1795, in PRO HO 42/36/190-1; Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.144.

⁸⁷ Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.1-3, 5, 14-15, 20. This section relies heavily on Cookson's work.

⁸⁸ See, for example, *P.H.*, xxx, 1409-10, Grafton, 17 February 1794.

condemnation of the causes of the war, but his antipathy to armed conflict in general, and pressure on him as a renowned humanitarian, led him to call for negotiations in 1795.⁸⁹ Mitchell has written, in the context of the split of the Whig party, that 'the issue of the war had so neatly divided up politics, that few politicians would have the agility to leap from one side to the other'.⁹⁰ Wilberforce was one of those few. The end of 1795 brought a government pledge to seek negotiations whenever it was consistent with British honour, and this, together with a conviction that the responsibility for the failure of the 1796 and 1797 peace talks was French, allowed him to support ministers again with a clear conscience, although he was, unsurprisingly, accused of cowardice and inconsistency by other anti-war protesters.⁹¹

To these 'Friends of Peace', men of liberal views, war was a power-game between small ruling élites which brought no benefit to the mass of society which might outweigh its horror and distress. Peace and harmony between nations were not only desirable but entirely possible, if only governments would subjugate their own ambitions to the furtherance of the good of their people. As Cookson remarks, the Friends of Peace lived at a time when the brutality and misery of war had plumbed new depths, yet they had a vision of a world without the 'sinful and hazardous enterprise' of war.⁹² Christian arguments demonstrating that war was intrinsically wrong were predominant in the anti-war protests, giving the Friends of Peace the moral high ground in the debate. These were based firstly on fundamental Christian beliefs, which Evangelicals tended to stress. As a God of love, God had commanded men not to kill one another, but rather to love their enemies. War was directly contrary to the order and harmony of His creation, and therefore unnatural in man, showing him at his worst. To wage war was flagrantly to disobey God as well as a cause of great suffering in human society. It might be used by God for purposes of

⁸⁹ See *P.H.*, xxxi, 1016, Wilberforce, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1237, Wilberforce, 26 January 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 1-9, Wilberforce, 27 May 1795. For pressure on him to vote against the war, see, for example, R.I. and S. Wilberforce (eds.), *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce* (2 vols.: London, 1840), i, 107-112, Stanhope to Wilberforce, 5 December 1794; 'Sonnet to W. Wilberforce', in the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 28 February 1795, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, p.148. Jeremy Bentham wrote to him in September 1796, suggesting that either he or Wilberforce should volunteer to be sent to Paris to negotiate (R.I. and S. Wilberforce (eds.), *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, i, 139-148).

⁹⁰ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.380; Mitchell, *The Disintegration of the Whig Party*, p.228.

⁹¹ See, for example, *An Appeal to the Moral Feelings of Samuel Thornton, Rowland Burdon, Hawkins Brown, Esqrs, and to Every Member of the House of Commons who Conscientiously Supports the Present Administration. In a Letter to William Wilberforce, Esq.* (London, 1797), esp. pp.38-9.

⁹² Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, p.30; Archibald Bruce, *A Serious View of the Remarkable Providences of the Times: and a Warning as to the Public Sins, Dangers, and Duty of British Protestants* (Glasgow, 1795), p.13.

national judgement and chastening, but the correct response was not the continuation of fighting, but the settlement of peace and the reform of the abuses in society which had offended Him, such as the slave trade.⁹³

Second, rational Dissenters usually emphasized arguments based on a particular Christian view of the universe, using history and nature as well as biblical exegesis. They argued that men lived in an ordered universe in which a benevolent God was in complete control, and in which human society ought to progress continually. As men's knowledge of the created universe extended further and further, so also would they advance in virtue and happiness, since by means of their powers of reason, they would understand what was good for them and what was not. God Himself was actively intervening to assist the progress of good, and so evil would eventually be eliminated by the cooperation of human reason and divine wisdom. War was therefore an eradicable evil, however much its horrors pointed to the contrary, and it would ultimately be rejected altogether by men.⁹⁴ John Raithby explained it thus:

There may be certain periods in the moral and physical existence of the world, in which, from concurrent causes, opinion becomes irresistible; and it is when, in such eventful periods, a momentary policy is opposed to its gigantic progress, that the usual connection between causes and effects seem to be disordered, and that the politician, who has failed to develop those causes, is dismayed and lost in the tremendous confusion.

The Rev. Vicesimus Knox, Master of Tunbridge School and Rector of Runwell and Ramsden Crays, Essex, agreed that war retarded human progress and that, while it was understandable in 'native barbarians', because of their lack of culture, knowledge and religion, it was unacceptable that 'a state justly pretending to all the polish of cultivated manners, and professing the purest Christianity' should wage war—it was 'mischievous, flagitious, and detestable, without one alleviating circumstance.'⁹⁵

⁹³ Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.32-3.

⁹⁴ Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.5-6, 31; Gilbert Wakefield, *Remarks on the General Orders of the Duke of York to his Army, on June 7, 1794* (London, 1794), pp.19-20; *Letter to Wilberforce*, pp.29-30.

⁹⁵ John Raithby, *Peace. Reasons Why Terms of Peace Should be Offered to the French Nation. Addressed to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, through the Medium of their Representatives in Parliament* (London, 1795), p.66; Vicesimus Knox, Preface to 'Antipolemus; or, the Plea of Reason, Religion, and Humanity, Against War. A Fragment; Translated from the Latin of Erasmus' (1795), in *Works* (7 vols.: London, 1824), v, 417. See also Raithby, *Peace*, pp.55-6; Jasper Wilson [i.e. Dr. James Currie], *A Letter, Commercial and Political, Addressed to the Right Honourable William Pitt; in which the Real Interests of Britain, in the Present Crisis, are Considered, and Some Observations are Offered on the General State of Europe* (2nd edition: London, 1793), pp.67-9; Wakefield, *Remarks on the General Orders*, pp.6-7, 31-3.

While Evangelicals underlined the depravity of the human race and the long-term need for improvement, and rational Christians stressed the corruption of the powerful and the need for immediate reforms, both were agreed that war was a social and moral evil which was fundamentally wrong. In its origins, wrote Raithby, it was unjust, because it was founded in superior power; its progress was terrible, stealing life; and its consequences were hateful, because they did not distinguish vice from virtue.⁹⁶ It was an offence against the moral universals of society which linked the individual with the state, and the state with the international community. The Friends of Peace emphasized the moral responsibilities of states and hoped that international law would one day be instituted in the course of society's progress. Just as individual murder had already become unacceptable to society, so the mass murder of warfare would surely then become intolerable to the international community.⁹⁷ 'How must a superior being pity or deride ants of the same ant-hill, armed with weapons of death, and destroying each other by thousands and tens of thousands, when separated by a straw or a puddle, in a dispute for a grain of wheat or a particle of dust, with space enough around them for all, and in the midst of abundance!' wrote Knox.⁹⁸ Anti-war poetry stressed the misery of war and the advantages (commercial, political and, above all, domestic) of peace.⁹⁹

The liberals were opposed not only to war in general, however, but also to this particular war, as unnecessary and unjust. Most admitted that, while aggressive war was inexcusable, a nation had the right to act in self-defence, although even this narrow definition of a 'just war' was rejected by some 'high' pacifists (including many Quakers) who argued that no war was justifiable or lawful. Those who allowed that defensive war could be justifiable rehearsed many of the same

⁹⁶ Raithby, *Peace*, pp.8-9. See also *Five Minutes Advice to the People of Great Britain, on the Present Alarming Situation of Public Affairs: in which the good policy of immediate hostilities with France is candidly investigated. By a Citizen of London* (London, 1792), p.6; *A Speech, in which the Question of a War with France is Stated and Examined. By a Lover of his Country* (Birmingham, 1793), pp.iii-iv, 6-7; *The Crisis Stated; or Serious and Seasonable Hints Upon War in General, and Upon the Consequences of a War with France* (Edinburgh, 1793), pp.4-5; J.H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793, and February 1794* (London, 1794), pp.33-64; *Considerations on the Principal Objections Against Overtures For Peace with France* (London, 1795), pp.1-2; 'Effects of War', in the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 16 November 1793, printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.96-7.

⁹⁷ Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.36-7.

⁹⁸ Vicesimus Knox, 'The Prospect of Perpetual and Universal Peace to be Established on the Principles of Christian Philanthropy' (1793), in *Works*, vi, 364.

⁹⁹ 'Ode to War', in the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 13 September 1794; the *Watchman*, (2 April 1796), 144-5; 'Poor Mary!', in the *Monthly Mirror*, (January 1798), 42; Thomas Adney, 'Sonnet', in the *European Magazine*, (June 1800), 471; 'Peace Preferable to War', in *ibid.*, (October 1793), 301; 'Peace More Desirable than War', in *ibid.*, (October 1793), 301 (another translation from the Latin from which the preceding poem was taken); 'Anticipation', in the *Cambridge Intelligencer*, 24 October 1795. These poems are all printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.123-4, 174-5, 208, 248-9, 87, 90, 156-8, respectively.

arguments as Foxite Whigs and radicals to demonstrate that the British war against revolutionary France was not defensive, and that Britain and its allies were perpetrating an unnecessary aggression on France.¹⁰⁰ They also argued that it was doubly criminal, since it was intended to thwart the progressivism of the French Revolution both within France and throughout Europe.¹⁰¹ Britain's connection with Europe was used to contend that war was undesirable, but liberals also insisted that it was neither necessary nor beneficial that Britain should fight Europe's battles for it.¹⁰²

After the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte to power in 1799, it was less easy to argue that the war was unjust, and anti-war arguments focused on the lack of necessity for the continuation of the conflict, emphasizing that the issues on which the 1796 and 1797 negotiations had foundered were different from the original causes of the war. The State and Church establishments were attacked for hypocrisy in waging and supporting the war: it was not really a war fought against opinions, nor for national security, nor for the saving of Christianity in France (many did not allow that the Roman Catholic French Court had been truly Christian in any case), but, they claimed, one waged for selfish profit and wealth with immorality and corruption. They condemned the use of the Church to reinforce government policy by way of public days of fasting and thanksgiving.¹⁰³

The liberals also reprobated what they perceived to be the unjust conduct of the war by the British government. Gilbert Wakefield protested that British cruelty and atrocity in prosecuting the war was worse than French violence, and that the British government ought to remove the plank from its own eye before it sought to remove the speck in the eye of the French government. The execution of one individual (Louis XVI), he suggested, was hardly less terrible than Pitt's alleged scheme to starve 25 million men, women and children by refusing to export British corn to France. Another pamphleteer criticized the object he supposed the allies to have of partitioning France, the encouragement of civil discord within France by

¹⁰⁰ See Raithby, *Peace*, pp.10-52, 57-60; *Five Minutes Advice*, pp.9-16; *A Speech*, pp.15-19; Wilson, *Letter to Pitt*, pp.34-44; Wakefield, *Remarks on the General Orders*, p.19; David Hartley, *Argument on the French Revolution* (Bath, 1794), pp.17-34.

¹⁰¹ *The Crisis Stated*, pp.7-9; Raithby, *Peace*, pp.40, 49-50; Hartley, *Argument on the French Revolution*, pp.14-16, 35-9, 43-5.

¹⁰² Raithby, *Peace*, pp.4, 6-7; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1236, Wilberforce, 26 January 1795; *ibid.*, xxxii, 8-9, Wilberforce, 27 May 1795.

¹⁰³ Knox, Preface to 'Antipolemus', pp.419-22; *idem.*, 'The Spirit of Despotism' (1795), in *Works*, v, 225; *P.H.*, xxxiv, 1538-9, Smith, 28 February 1800; *The Crisis Stated*, p.18; Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp.v-viii, 1-29.

Britain's support of the counter-revolutionary cause and the alleged forgery and circulation of assignats within France by Pitt.¹⁰⁴

The bad effects of the conflict on Britain were further adduced by Friends of Peace to support their case against it. One of their principal arguments, chiefly since it drew support from other quarters of the anti-war lobby, was that the war would have a ruinous effect on the British economy. 'This country,' asserted the Duke of Grafton in 1795, 'was so shaken that nothing but peace could restore it.' The conflict impoverished honest merchants and industrious manufacturers, it overloaded the community with taxation, it threatened the security of Britain's lucrative colonial possessions and it aggravated the substantial inequality in the distribution of property 'by enriching a race of harpies, contractors, commissaries and stock-jobbers' at the expense of what the liberals regarded as the virtuous, enterprising and valuable middle classes of society. The flat rate of the 1799 Income Tax was especially attacked for its failure to take any account of individual financial circumstances, thus falling more heavily on the productive classes of society, rather than upon the non-productive, ostentatious rich.¹⁰⁵ Emsley reports that 'In Nottingham the anti-war party took its stand almost entirely on economic grounds, making practically no comment on the Revolution in France.'¹⁰⁶ The Friends of Peace also attacked the war for aggravating periods of 'scarcity' due to harvest failure, since it was necessary to send a certain amount of grain to the army and navy, and since the war disrupted the importation of foreign grain. They often failed to match the chronology of price movements to their arguments, and their statistics were often either faulty or insufficient, but they made good rhetorical capital from it. 'Let others talk of glory; let others celebrate the heroes, who are to deluge the world with blood,' wrote William Frend; 'the words of the poor market woman will still resound in my ears, We are sconced three-pence in the shilling, one-fourth part of our labour. For what?'¹⁰⁷

The war also vastly increased the National Debt and seriously unsettled confidence in public credit, with greater repercussions than ever before, according to liberals, because of the increased volume of British commerce, because of the fear

¹⁰⁴ Wakefield, *Remarks on the General Orders*, pp.8, 20-4; *Letter to Wilberforce*, pp.30-5.

¹⁰⁵ *P.H.*, xxxii, 200-1, Grafton, 29 October 1795; *Five Minutes Advice*, 6-7, 18-19; Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.75-83. See also *A Speech*, pp.7-8, 10-14; Knox, 'The Spirit of Despotism', pp.213-5; *The Crisis Stated*, p.14; R.I. and S. Wilberforce (eds.), *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, i, 95-99, Dr. James Currie to Wilberforce, 23 April 1793.

¹⁰⁶ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.31.

¹⁰⁷ William Frend, *Peace and Union Recommended to the Associated Bodies of Republicans and Anti-Republicans* (2nd edition: Cambridge, 1793), appendix ii, pp.65-7; *idem.*, *Scarcity of Bread. A Plan for Reducing the High Price of this Article, in a Letter Addressed by William Frend to William Devaynes, Esq.* (London, 1793), pp.1-5; Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.68-9.

that France might actually attack Great Britain itself in this conflict, and because of the alarm caused by the suspicion that numbers of Britons entertained pro-French sympathies and might assist an invasion attempt.¹⁰⁸ Domestic economic growth was therefore retarded and economic stability threatened by an unproductive and destructive use of both labour and capital, in this Smithian analysis. Economic disaster was gloomily predicted by the liberals throughout the 1790s, until in 1801 work was published which convincingly demonstrated that Britain had achieved an impressive rate of growth during the eighteenth century and was showing no signs of economic collapse, even in the midst of an expensive war. Nevertheless, they gathered support from industrial and trading interests in the north of England which were badly hit by the effects of the war.¹⁰⁹

Friends of Peace lamented the increase in the numbers of soldiers and sailors. Knox maintained that 'the whole of the military system is much indebted for its support to that prevailing passion of human nature, pride.' It encouraged the ambition and vanity of members of the squirearchy, who became captains and bribed volunteers to enlist in order to further their own careers of sycophancy. Wakefield reminded his readers that the occupation of a soldier was largely made up of 'rapine, blasphemy, blood, and carnage,' which was incompatible with a Christian's profession. To Wilberforce, the involvement of so many of the population in military life was 'a very serious evil, tending to hurt essentially the morals of the people, and to detach them from the habits of civil life; and though no present consequences might be felt, yet very material ones might, at some distance of time, follow.'¹¹⁰ The system of recruiting by means of crimps and the press-gang was naturally also deplored by them. William Frend forecast riots if the system was not abolished, and Knox thought the practice little better than slavery, hiring and selling 'images of God...to do the work of butchers'.¹¹¹

Cookson sees the expression of the grievances of a non-élite as the source of the intensity of much anti-war argument.¹¹² Like the Foxites and radicals, the Friends of Peace attacked what they claimed was corruption in high places, but they

¹⁰⁸ William Morgan, *Facts Addressed to the Serious Attention of the People of Great Britain Respecting the Expence of the War, and the State of the National Debt* (London, 1796); [William Roscoe], *Thoughts on the Causes of the Present Failures* (London, 1793); Wilson, *Letter to Pitt*, pp.1-32, 71-2.

¹⁰⁹ Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.55-64, 25-6.

¹¹⁰ Knox, 'The Spirit of Despotism', pp.250, 252; Wakefield, *Remarks on the General Orders*, pp.29-30; *P.H.*, xxxii, 6, Wilberforce, 27 May 1795.

¹¹¹ Frend, *Scarcity of Bread*, p.6; Knox, 'The Spirit of Despotism', pp.202-3.

¹¹² Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.26-9, 151. The argument becomes increasingly clear in the 1803-15 phase of the conflict, when northern manufacturing interests were much more involved in the anti-war campaign. See also Knox, 'The Spirit of Despotism', p.243.

broadened it to include not only government ministers but also all within the governing classes of society. Peace, they claimed, was not sincerely sought after by these people, because the war was too profitable for them. 'Armaments, reviews, drums, flags, crowds, and acclamations, are the hacknied stage-tricks employed to cover a measure which will not bear a cool examination.' Knox suggested that they were devoted to 'the preservation of their own power, nominal honours, and pleasures, at all events, though it cost the poor citizen many of his comforts; and the poor soldier his limbs or his life; and the public its security or its opulence', and that their worship of fashionable pleasure left them with no time for public Christian worship or motivation. He also attacked the government's repressive legislation and their use of spies and military barracks around the country as an assault on civil liberty.¹¹³ Dr. Currie (alias 'Jasper Wilson') was kinder to Pitt than most, applauding his financial reforms and support for parliamentary reform and the abolition of the slave trade in the 1780s, and attributing his present 'weaknesses and failures' to his long duration in power. Others were inclined to side with the Foxites and radicals, criticizing Pitt for his apparent abandonment of liberalism in an unprincipled pursuit of power and self-aggrandizement.¹¹⁴

Liberals called, therefore, as many conservatives did, for a moral reformation alongside peace. Wilberforce later wrote of Pitt, 'If only he had tried to "govern by principle", he would have succeeded. And then the whole British body politic would have been cleansed and strengthened. Even so great a cataclysm as the French Revolution would have left it unshaken.'¹¹⁵ Branded unpatriotic for their refusal to support the war, they insisted on a public right to challenge the government concerning the justice and necessity of the conflict.¹¹⁶ William Roscoe, the Leeds anti-war campaigner, wrote of a moral patriotism that differed from blind and ugly bigotry:

Every pretended patriot, every proud and ignorant individual, can cry out for war, and urge on his neighbour to the work of destruction; but where is the man who will oppose himself to the national madness?...He who would dare to attempt this is indeed a patriot....The truth is, that a patriot must be a virtuous man, and a

¹¹³ *The Crisis Stated*, p.4-6; Knox, 'The Prospect of Perpetual and Universal Peace', pp.358-62; idem., 'The Spirit of Despotism', pp.226-7. See also Knox, 'The Spirit of Despotism', pp.139-403; Raithby, *Peace*, pp.4-6; *An Appeal to the Moral Feelings*, pp.1-13; *P.H.*, xxx, 1409-10, Grafton, 17 February 1794.

¹¹⁴ Wilson, *Letter to Pitt*, pp.61-3; Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.15-16, 147-150.

¹¹⁵ Quoted in Robin Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery: 1776-1848* (London, 1988), p.152. On peace and a moral reformation, see for example Knox, 'The Spirit of Despotism', p.258; Raithby, *Peace*, p.54.

¹¹⁶ *A Speech*, p.14; Raithby, *Peace*, pp.2-4, 57; *Five Minutes Advice*, p.20; *The Crisis Stated*, pp.14-17, 22-3.

virtuous man will not commit or encourage injustice for the sake either of himself or others.¹¹⁷

War was worse than the dangers of negotiation or peace. Britain could not conquer France, it appeared, and it should therefore seek peace as soon as possible instead of provoking the enemy to still greater wrath and vengeance. Peace would also halt the progress in violence of the Revolution and allow France to stabilize and become a valuable neighbour once again. Perhaps, suggested Wilberforce to the House of Commons, after the suspicion that the allies wanted to divide France among them was removed by an offer of negotiation with the French government, the French people might become 'more and more alienated from their rulers, whilst groaning under the calamities of a war continued by their obstinacy, and the alienation would even extend to the convention itself', while the British government could only increase in popularity with its own people. There was much more to lose by continuing the war, and much less to gain, than by pursuing peace.¹¹⁸

Every opportunity should therefore be taken to negotiate peace. 'Is it discussion of opinions we fear? and war the remedy!' exclaimed David Hartley of Bath. 'The obvious imputation from such affectation of timidity, would be, a charge of conscious deviations from the national interest, which the alarmists were anxious from unostensible motives to conceal.' Wilberforce argued at the end of 1794 that the worst of French Jacobinism was spent, and it should no longer be used as an excuse for not negotiating. France was beginning to display signs of moderation once more. 'He thought it a very important duty in every war,' he told the Commons in May 1795,

not only to take care that in the commencement it was just and necessary, but to look out also from time to time, for every opening which might be given for the conclusion of it; to see whether the original motives for it continued—whether our country, whether that of the enemy, whether the state of other powers, and the general circumstances of the times, made it still needful to pursue the path we were treading.¹¹⁹

Even if the government of France was still unstable, that was no reason not to hold talks with it. That was an argument morally false, according to Raithby, for it was an

¹¹⁷ Henry Roscoe, *The Life of William Roscoe* (London, 1833), pp.298-9, 431-3. See also Raithby, *Peace*, pp.1, 32-3.

¹¹⁸ Raithby, *Peace*, pp.74-6; *Considerations on the Principal Objections*, pp.4-18, 21-30; Wilson, *Letter to Pitt*, pp.49-50; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1025-6, Wilberforce, 30 December 1794. See also *P.H.*, xxx, 453, Smith, 18 February 1793.

¹¹⁹ Hartley, *Argument on the French Revolution*, pp.4-5; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1016-7, Wilberforce, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxiii, 2, Wilberforce, 27 May 1795.

obvious pretext—Britain never considered the stability of the Turkish government when treating with it, despite its permanent instability.

Hitherto we have been content with the usual idea of security in making peace, that is, that neither party would break the treaty, till [it] squared with their ideas of policy to do so. Now we are to be satisfied with nothing short of abstract ideas of security, and have the indecency to censure the French for perfidy, before we have a single instance of it to produce.¹²⁰

Another pamphleteer pointed out that if the French rulers had enough influence to persuade their people to endure a war they disliked, they would surely be able to persuade them to maintain peace.¹²¹ The dangers of risking the insecurity due to an unstable French government were hardly as great as those involved in continuing the war, argued Wilberforce. 'He was ready to allow that an extensive peace establishment was a great evil; but surely it was speaking of it in too strong terms to put it on a level with a state of actual war.'¹²² Continuing in an unjust and unnecessary war was more humiliating than offering to negotiate.¹²³

In any case, Friends of Peace argued, it was highly unlikely that a counter-revolution would be accomplished in France by war. British resources might be great, but those of France, energized by its Revolution, were superior. The British government must understand that the great majority of French people were unwavering in their support for their republican form of government—not even the executions of successive rulers had caused them to change their minds—and armed force was impotent against such strength of opinion. Indeed, such opinion was likely to grow only more stubborn in the face of attack, so that counter-revolution, if it was possible under any circumstances, would only occur in peace. Madness was not to be coerced by force but might be persuaded by mildness and indulgence.¹²⁴ Success, maintained William Smith in 1800, had eluded Britain: 'It was idle to consider how many islands we had captured, or what new possessions we had acquired: the question was, had we gained the object of the war? What that object was, it would

¹²⁰ Raithby, *Peace*, pp.72-3.

¹²¹ *Considerations on the Principal Objections*, p.21.

¹²² *P.H.*, xxxi, 1023, Wilberforce, 30 December 1794.

¹²³ Raithby, *Peace*, p.54; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1022, Wilberforce, 30 December 1794; *ibid.*, xxxi, 1234, Wilberforce, 26 January 1795.

¹²⁴ Raithby, *Peace*, pp.61-4, 67, 74, 76; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1234-6, Wilberforce, 26 January 1795; *Considerations on the Principal Objections*, p.v. See also Wilson, *Letter to Pitt*, pp.50-5; Wakefield, *Remarks on the General Orders*, pp.28-9; Hartley, *Argument on the French Revolution*, p.40; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1019-21, Wilberforce, 30 December 1794.

be no easy matter to determine, but whichever of the various objects that had been stated was the true one, we were as far from it as when war was first declared.’¹²⁵

While some Friends of Peace were inclined to believe that the French Revolution was part of the general progression of the world towards enlightenment and harmony, they did not sympathize with the French armies as did the Foxites and radicals. Wilberforce was far from being a Foxite, although he sometimes joined forces with them, and while he might have wanted peace with France he continued to advocate war against Jacobinism at home. He opposed the withdrawal of British troops from St. Domingo in 1797 because it would be ceding ground to French republicanism in a war which the British government now appeared to be willing to end. He also supported the government’s decision in 1800 to refuse negotiations with Bonaparte, if privately and reluctantly, because he thought it better to wait for the result of the Austrian negotiations with him.¹²⁶ Others protested their attachment to the British political order, perhaps in an attempt to gain a better hearing for their recommendations. One writer introduced his pamphlet with the explanation that although he advised a policy of seeking peace with France,

he was not an admirer of French principles, or an approver of French proceedings....On the contrary, he has contemplated with almost uninterrupted disapprobation, every proceeding of the French people since the month of July 1789, and every principle from which those proceedings were deduced, or upon which they have been defended.¹²⁷

The Friends of Peace were also prominent in encouraging the Volunteer Corps at the time of the 1798 invasion scare (and again in 1803-5), since they believed that self-defence was wholly justified. They served in the Volunteers themselves, wrote essays in their favour and preached sermons to them.¹²⁸

The practical tactics of the Friends of Peace were those best adapted to channelling the diverse strands of hostility to the war. One of the most successful was the development of the concept of a ‘war interest’ and a ‘war system’. It was an all-purpose charge against the government under which various complaints and interest groups could unite—Foxite Whigs, radicals (as they used anti-war protest in their own campaign for political reform, so perhaps they themselves were used), industrial and trading interests hard-hit by the conflict, Dissenters who thought

¹²⁵ *P.H.*, xxxv, 647, Smith, November 1800.

¹²⁶ Blackburn, *The Overthrow of Colonial Slavery*, pp.151, 153; R.I. and S. Wilberforce (eds.), *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, i, 209-10, Wilberforce to J. Hare Naylor, 5 July 1800.

¹²⁷ *Considerations on the Principal Objections*, p.iv. See also *Five Minutes Advice*, pp.3, 17-18.

¹²⁸ Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, pp.163, 166-9.

themselves unfairly ostracized from the ecclesiastical and political order and ordinary people who wanted to protest against high prices and shortages of grain. This was an adept way of focusing their various sectional grievances against the war and the establishment.¹²⁹ Town corporations (such as Norwich and Nottingham), county meetings (such as those of Northumberland, Durham and Yorkshire) and Dissenting and Methodist chapels which were sympathetic were harnessed to the cause and used to propagate anti-war views.¹³⁰ Anti-war chapels used national Fast Days not to protest against the establishment by non-observance of them but rather as a platform from which to voice anti-loyalist sympathies. This was 'the one war ritual' which they could 'easily convert to their [own] purposes' without fear of government repression.¹³¹ Public meetings were held, and occasionally the liberals attempted to convert loyalist meetings to their views. Petitions for peace were virtually impossible in the fervently loyalist atmosphere of the early years of the decade, but they were organized in 1795, 1797, 1801, when there was greatest discontent with the war. The Yorkshire petitions of 1801 gathered some 30 000 signatures.¹³²

The liberal press, one of the most powerful weapons available to the Friends of Peace, was also used to great effect. The Whig and radical London newspapers and periodicals provided the basis of liberal pre-eminence in the press, and there were dozens of liberal provincial papers and periodicals, including the *Manchester Herald*, the *Sheffield Register*, the *Leicester Herald* and the *Leeds Mercury*. There were many liberal and Dissenting printers, booksellers and publishers in the capital and throughout the country, and there was a great wealth and breadth of talent and intellect in the anti-war camp, with such writers as Thomas Erskine, Mrs. Barbauld, Gilbert Wakefield and Henry Brougham. Letters and book reviews were published in newspapers, and even cautious editors could be selective with material.¹³³

With quiet persistence, the Friends of Peace began a campaign against the war in the 1790s that would continue and develop greatly in the post-Amiens phase of the conflict.¹³⁴ They harnessed various political, religious and commercial groups to their support whenever they could, including the political opposition groups of Foxites in Parliament and radicals outside it. The hostility of both Foxites and radicals to the war was largely instrumental, thinly veiling ulterior motives. By

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.29.

¹³⁰ Ibid., pp.153

¹³¹ Ibid., p.134.

¹³² Ibid., p.190.

¹³³ Ibid., pp.84-113, 131-4.

¹³⁴ See *ibid.*, pp.173ff.

means of their religious and moral primary opposition to the war itself, however, and their great skill in channelling many diverse protests against the Pitt administration into an anti-war discourse, the Friends of Peace took the real leadership of the campaign against the British government's war against revolutionary France.

6. The Churches: Political Preaching, Patriotism and Pacifism

Reacting against a previous relative neglect by historians of political thought in the eighteenth century, J.C.D. Clark, Robert Hole and John Brims have recently emphasized the continued importance of religion to the great majority of the British people in the eighteenth century, and they have shown that religious arguments contributed significantly to the political debates of the period. Nancy U. Murray's work in particular demonstrates that English ministers of religion took a great interest in the French Revolution and in its British repercussions, and that their reactions to it played a part in the rise and fall in the influence of their different church denominations.¹ This chapter considers the theological-political responses to the war of churchmen of different British denominations.

It has been shown in previous chapters that religious arguments were used by laymen both to support and to oppose the British government's war against revolutionary France. Conservative writers of the 1790s not only endlessly repeated religious doctrines and reasoning enjoining submission and loyalty to the government, 'as a last, fine-meshed net to catch those who had eluded the looser weave of the secular arguments',² but they also justified the war in religious terms. Influenced by Burke, by probably a majority of British clergymen, and later by the Abbé Barruel and Professor John Robison, they argued that the atheist Republic posed a threat to the institutions and teachings of religion in Britain and throughout Europe. While religion was perhaps less used by radicals than by conservatives to validate their constitutional theories, both radicals and Friends of Peace used religious arguments to oppose the war, claiming that armed conflict was fundamentally in breach of the spirit and teachings of Christianity; some, indeed, opposed it primarily because of their religious convictions.

Religious polemic on the war was generally used by loyalist and pacifist laymen in combination with political arguments and mostly in a supporting role. By

¹ J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge, 1985); idem., *Revolution and Rebellion: State and Society in England in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1986); Robert Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England, 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1989); idem., 'English Sermons and Tracts as Media of Debate on the French Revolution, 1789-99', in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp.18-38; John Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition and Scottish Radicalism in the 1790s', in T. Brotherstone (ed.), *Covenant, Charter and Party. Traditions of revolt and protest in modern Scottish History* (Aberdeen, 1989); Nancy U. Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution on the Church of England and Its Rivals', unpublished D. Phil. thesis, (University of Oxford, 1975). See also Emma Vincent, 'The Responses of Scottish Churchmen to the French Revolution, 1789-1802', *Scottish Historical Review*, 73 (1994), 191-215.

² Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.101.

contrast, sermons preached by churchmen on the subject of the conflict usually emphasized a theological reading of the situation and made less attempt to persuade their audiences with secular political reasoning. The theology and political theology, of various colours, were not new, as the widespread use of them by lay writers testifies; but the warfare of the 1790s, and the urgency and breadth of its impact upon society, were unprecedented in British experience. It seems likely that ordinary local ministers would have been more concerned with the war than with the French Revolution itself (as distinct from the general issues of domestic loyalty and submission which the Revolution highlighted). The diary of 'the Country Parson', the Rev. James Woodforde, has much more to say about the practical effects of the war on an ordinary churchman's life and work than it does about the Revolution, which seems to have disturbed him greatly only in so far as it harmed the French King and Queen.³ The war, indeed, affected almost everyone in the country, with its long duration, its demands for human and material resources and its threat of a French invasion.

Churchmen therefore rushed to apply well-established theological principles to it and to lead their congregations and readerships in what they believed to be sound Christian thinking and responses. Questions such as the moral and theological justifications for war and patriotism were raised and answered, and eternal issues were emphasized in the light of the cruelties of war. The nature of the conflict, and such grounds for it as related to religious and moral issues, were discussed in terms of a theological understanding of the nature of God and of man, and in terms of a political theology of society, the State and the international community. The conduct of the British government's war effort was rarely examined. As in the controversy on the Revolution, so in the argument over the war: the responses of churchmen to the war did not constitute a new debate on it, but simply another layer of national discussion, another language of discourse.⁴ By appointing several Thanksgiving and Fast Days each year to be nationally observed, the government displayed its concern to benefit from both the propaganda potential of the vast network of loyalist preachers across the country, and the public legitimation of the war which theology could provide. This chapter examines the wide support given by the Established Churches for the war and the varying opinions of Dissenting ministers, based on their political theology and its application to the war, and the attitudes and actions this led them to urge upon their congregations.

³ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', p.18; John Beresford (ed.), *The Diary of a Country Parson: the Reverend James Woodforde, 1758-1802* (5 vols.: Oxford, 1924-31), iii, 124, 146, 280, 281, 396, 397-8; *ibid.*, iv, 2-4, 12, 21-2.

⁴ Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.7; *idem.*, 'English Sermons and Tracts', pp.30-1.

The theology, political theology, and ecclesiastical and political concerns of Established Church ministers in England and Scotland led most of them to accept the inevitability of war in the present world and to support the British government in fighting the present one against revolutionary France, and to call for religion, virtue, loyalty, patriotism and endurance to be practised by the British people in response. Liberals, Evangelicals and Methodists within the Established Churches, however, were sometimes less vocal in their support, and a small minority expressed opposition to the war.

The theological doctrine most important to the understanding of Establishment ministers concerning the war against revolutionary France was probably that of divine Providence, 'the firm and deep foundation of true religion'.⁵ God ruled over the world, not remaining remote or aloof from its affairs, but intervening according to His will and purposes. The Rev. Dr. Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk wrote in 1794: 'The Almighty governs the world, not merely by general laws, but by constant superintendence and frequent interposition', and he illustrated this from the history of the Jews and of Christianity.⁶ As for the nature of man, most Establishment preachers emphasized his fallen condition. He had been created in the image of God, and so given high dignity; but man's refusal to submit to God and His demands had marred God's image in him and made him capable of gross sin. Sin was 'the cause of all national evils, and if persisted in by any people, will provoke the Almighty *to cause his soul to depart from them*'.⁷ Because God was actively interested in and intervened in human affairs, it was natural that rebellion against Him should result in chastisement. In the case of nations, this usually came in such forms as weak and unstable government, irreligion, economic depression and war.⁸ National repentance

⁵ Charles Moss, *A Sermon, Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons, at the Church of St. Margaret, Westminster, on Wednesday, March 7, 1798, Being the Day appointed by His Majesty's Royal Proclamation, to be observed as a Day of Solemn Fasting and Humiliation* (London, 1798), p.7.

⁶ Alexander Carlyle, *National Depravity the Cause of National Calamities, a sermon from Jeremiah 6:8* (Edinburgh, 1794), p.3. See also Thomas Hay, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons, at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on Thursday, January 30, 1794: Being the day appointed to be observed as the Day of the Martyrdom of King Charles I* (London, 1794), pp.15-16; *A Sermon, Composed for the Late General Fast, Observed on the Eighth of March, 1797. By a Minister of the Church of England* (London, 1797), pp.2-6; William Magee, *A Sermon, Preached in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin, on Thursday, the 16th day of February, 1797, Being the Day Appointed for a National Thanksgiving on Account of the Providential Deliverance of this Kingdom from the Late Threatened Invasion* (Dublin, 1797), pp.5-13; Richard Valpy, *A Sermon, Preached August 13, 1798, Before the Reading and Henley Associators, the Woodley Cavalry, and the Reading Volunteers, at the Consecration of the Colors of the Reading Association* (Reading, 1798), pp.5-6.

⁷ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', p.33; quotation from Carlyle, *National Depravity*, p.9.

⁸ Alexander Carlyle, *The Love of Our Country, explained and enforced in a sermon from Psalm 137:5,6* (Edinburgh, 1797), p.14.

in such dark times was not only possible, but necessary, in order to regain God's favour. Texts such as *Jeremiah 18:8* were quoted: 'If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them.'⁹

War in general was defended on two counts by Establishment clergy. Firstly, it was simply a fact of life after the Fall. Wars would not 'cease in all the earth' until the second coming of Christ; they were part of the general suffering and misery of human life caused by sin, and they could not be eradicated until sinful human beings were no more and the new heaven and the new earth were established.¹⁰ Second, while some wars were waged from 'a variety of sinister and unrighteous motives', others, particularly those undertaken in self-defence, were just and necessary, and Christians need feel no shame for being involved in them.¹¹ 'God not only gave us life and property,' argued William Vincent,

but implanted courage in our breast, as well as other qualities of the mind; and if our life or property is in danger, we have the same right to defend them against the enemy who would kill us, as against the wild beast which would devour us....I am persuaded no command of God forbids, no precept of the Gospel condemns, military service in the cause of justice.¹²

Since God was active in society, religion was essential in order to please Him and to ensure the social and political well-being of any state. Moreover, as 'the great cement of society', religion could go further than the law, reaching men's inward thoughts as well as their outward actions, restraining the wicked and encouraging the

⁹ John Erskine, *The Fatal Consequences and General Sources of Anarchy: a discourse on Isaiah 24:1-5* (Edinburgh, 1793), pp.41-2; Thomas Hardy, *Fidelity to the British Constitution, the duty and interest of the people* (Edinburgh, 1794), p.36.

¹⁰ Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations*, p.4; William Agutter, *The Faithful Soldier and the True Christian; and the Miseries of Rebellion: Considered in Two Sermons, Preached at the Parish Church of All-Saints, Northampton, September 9th, 1798* (Northampton, 1798), p.8.

¹¹ John Hampson, *Observations on the Present War, the Projected Invasion, and a Decree of the National Convention for the Emancipation of the Slaves in the French Colonies* (Sunderland, [1793]), pp.5-6. See also J. Morgan, *A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of Towcester, on Thursday, 29th November, 1798, the Day Appointed by His Majesty, to Return Thanks to Almighty God, for our Recent and Important Successes in Distant Seas and Elsewhere* (Towcester, 1798), pp.29-30; Thomas Horne, *A Sermon, Preached Before the Chiswick Military Association, on Sunday, Sept. 2, 1798* (London, 1798), pp.3-6.

¹² William Vincent, 'A Sermon Delivered in the Church of St. Magnus, London Bridge, November 25; and in the Church of Allhallows the Great and the Less, Thames Street, December 16, 1798; Before the Associated Volunteer Companies, in the Wards of Bridge, Candlewick, and Dowgate', in *Sermons on Faith, Doctrines, and Public Duties* (2 vols.: London, 1817), i, 290-1. See also Samuel Horsley's charge to his diocesan clergy of Rochester in 1798, quoted in Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.170.

good. Human nature was so corrupt that government alone was unable to restrain it.¹³ 'When men agree to cast off the fear of God, they will seldom long accord in any thing else,' warned John Newton. The Rev. Dr. Thomas Somerville of Jedburgh stated that 'without religion...no civil government can be maintained or supported'.¹⁴

Preachers therefore thought themselves justified in discussing political subjects from the pulpit. Robert Hole remarks that 'Most agreed in practice that, whilst it was improper for their political opponents to do so, their own views were so quintessentially truthful they were not out of place.' Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandaff, told the clergy of his diocese in 1798 that it was necessary for them to beware of 'wicked Teachers, who are creeping in among the common people, and attempting, by profane writings and evil communications, to unchristianize the world'. Some bishops voiced concern at the numbers of non-resident clergy in their dioceses, and the consequent loss of sound political influence in the parishes concerned.¹⁵ The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland regularly assured the King of its clergy's undeviating perseverance in their exertions to preserve sound doctrine and to advance genuine piety, for the benefit of public order. Even those, such as the Evangelical, John Erskine, who acknowledged that ministers did not have the detailed facts necessary to advise politicians, insisted that they should emphasize

¹³ Carlyle, *Love of Our Country*, p.23; J.E. Bradley, *Church, Clergy and Counter-Revolution in England, 1789-1800* (a paper presented at the annual conference of the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies at New Orleans in April 1989), p.11. See also Thomas Hay, *A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons, at St. Margaret's, Westminster, on Wednesday, January 30, 1793: Being the day appointed as the Day of the Martyrdom of King Charles I* (London, 1793), p.12; idem., *Sermon...on ...Thursday, January 30, 1794*, pp.17-19; William Knox, *A Sermon, Preached Before His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, on Thursday the 29th November, 1798, Being the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God* (Dublin, 1798), pp.10-12; Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.134-5, 137.

¹⁴ John Newton, *Motives to Humiliation and Praise. A Sermon, Preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary Woolnoth, Lombard-Street, on December 19, 1797. The Day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God, for Our Late Naval Victories* (London, 1798), p.16; Thomas Somerville, *The Effects of the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1793), p.89. See also Thomas Hardy, *The Importance of Religion to National Prosperity* (Edinburgh, 1794), p.12; Spencer Madan, *A Sermon Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in the Abbey Church of Westminster, on January the 30th, 1795, Being the day appointed to be observed as the day of the Martyrdom of King Charles I* (London, 1795), pp.18-19; William Laurence Brown, *The Influence of Religion on National Prosperity. A Sermon, Preached in the West Church, Aberdeen, March 10th, 1796. The Day Appointed for the General Fast* (Edinburgh, 1796), pp.5-38; idem., 'A View of the Present Times, with Regard to Religion and Morals', appendix to John Leland, *A View of the Principal Deistical Writers that have appeared in England in the last and present century* (5th edition, 2 vols.: London, 1798), ii, 498-506; Vicesimus Knox, 'The Spirit of Despotism', p.384.

¹⁵ Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.145; Richard Watson, 'A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Diocese of Landaff, in June 1798', in *Miscellaneous Tracts on Religious, Political, and Agricultural Subjects* (2 vols.: London, 1815), i, 148-52, 134-5. On non-residency, see *Dropmore*, iv, 55-6, Charles M. Warburton to [the Marquis of Buckingham], 12 January 1798; *ibid.*, vi, 6, Grenville to Pitt, 4 November 1799, on a letter to Grenville from the Bishop of Lincoln. See also the loyal address of the bishop and clergy of London and Westminster printed in the *London Gazette*, 10-12 July 1792, and that of the archbishop and clergy of the archdiocese of Canterbury in *ibid.*, 14-17 July 1792.

the general maxims of virtue and prudence which ought to guide the actions of politicians.¹⁶ Such political preaching was held to be especially necessary at a time of national emergency or when the King appointed special Thanksgiving and Fast Days to be observed nationwide.¹⁷

Establishment ministers were influenced not only by these theological and political-theological positions, however, but also by three current fears that they held concerning Church and State. Like other conservatives in the 1790s they were fearful of political insurrection and domestic anarchy, and they believed that it was better to err on the side of caution, repressing anything which might lead to the subversion of law and authority and clinging to the emblems and products of civilization as they knew it. Since man was fallen and imperfect, restraint was necessary. Hole shows that discussion of various forms of government and legitimate means of changing a government disappeared from political-theological discourse very quickly after the French Revolution erupted and were replaced by a greater emphasis on order and control.¹⁸

Second, they were anxious that the relationship of Church and State might change at the expense of the influence of the Established Church. The Dissenters' unsuccessful campaign in 1787-90 to have the Test and Corporation Acts repealed, and full toleration granted, nevertheless called into question the relationship of the Church of England with the State. Murray comments that the triumph of the Established Church was by no means a foregone conclusion in 1787: the second House of Commons vote on repeal, in 1789, lost by only twenty votes. The fears inspired by the French Revolution among the landed interest achieved a defeat for repeal of 294 votes to 105 in 1790, but the Anglican clergy could not know how long such support for them would last, and they were thus encouraged to support the government loudly throughout the 1790s to prove their crucial importance to it.¹⁹ The Church of Scotland was legally independent of the State, unlike the Established Church of England, but the Moderate party in the Kirk, dominant in the General Assembly for so much of the eighteenth century, was increasingly feeling the heat of

¹⁶ See, for example, the Assembly's 'Answers to the King's Letters' in *The Principal Acts of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1798, 1799); John Erskine, *Fatal Consequences*, pp.10-11. See also Robert Boucher Nickolls, *The Duty of Supporting and Defending Our Country and Constitution: A Discourse, preached at Middleham, in the County of York, February 10, 1793, On the Prospect of a War* (York, 1793), p.i.

¹⁷ W.L. Brown, *The Spirit of the Times Considered. A Sermon, Preached in the English Church at Utrecht, February 13, 1793, the Day Appointed by the States for the General Thanksgiving, Fasting and Prayer* (London, 1793), pp.10-11; idem., 'A View of the Present Times', pp.473-4; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1257, the Bishop of Llandaff, 27 January 1795. See also Carlyle, *Love of Our Country*, p.2; Andrew Hunter, *A Due Attention to the Public Institutions of Religion Recommended* (Edinburgh, 1793).

¹⁸ Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.97, 128 and *passim*.

¹⁹ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.21-2, 310.

the Evangelical (or 'Popular') attack and advance, and they felt justified in looking for government assistance in return for their public support of the government.²⁰

Third, ministers feared for the acceptance of Christian theology itself throughout British society. The rationalism and deism of Enlightenment philosophy seemed to be at the root of the dislocation in France, and the Revolution's atheism and confidence in man's inherent reason, virtue and perfectibility directly challenged Christian belief. 'The contest, in the present day,' wrote William Laurence Brown, 'is not between one particular form of religion and another, but between the existence of any religion whatever, and the total extirpation of it'.²¹ Many believed that political reform and religious free-thinking went hand-in-hand; overt worship of reason in Paris and Paine's blasphemous attacks on Christianity drew the cry of 'the Church in danger', rallying even Evangelicals within the Establishment.

These fears, combined with the political theology of Establishment churchmen, determined their views on the French Revolution, on loyalty to the government and on the war. Many churchmen did not condemn the Revolution immediately: like many others in Britain, they underwent a tidal change in their attitudes towards it. William Robertson, Moderator of the General Assembly from 1762-80, at first denounced Burke's *Reflections* as 'ravings', and Thomas Somerville called them 'the ranting declarations of aristocratic pride'.²² Thomas Hardy wrote of the Scottish ministers' initial response to the Revolution: 'We saw a great people reclaiming the inheritance of men, and boldly aspiring to be free.'²³ Their idea of 'the inheritance of men' was substantially more limited than that of the radicals, however, and, for this reason, they did not think themselves inconsistent when they changed, around 1792, to denounce what the Revolution had become. By then it could no longer be regarded as moving towards a moderate, constitutional monarchy as many of them had hoped.²⁴ Others were happy to assume that the Revolution was divine retribution for the French having taken the American side in the War of Independence,²⁵ while others still reacted with hostility almost immediately. William Jones, the curate at Nayland, Suffolk, famous for his 'John Bull' letters of 1792, denounced the French Revolution publicly in 1789, as did George Horne, the Dean of

²⁰ See BMC 8357, John Kay, 'Faithful Service Rewarded' (1793).

²¹ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', pp.29-30, 35; idem., *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.143-4; Brown, 'A View of the Present Times', p.492. See also Brown, *ibid.*, pp.473-4.

²² Quoted in J.D. Brims, 'The Scottish Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1983), pp.75, 59.

²³ Thomas Hardy, *The Patriot* (Edinburgh, 1793), p.4. On England, see Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.99.

²⁴ Somerville, *Effects of the French Revolution*, pp.1-7, 13.

²⁵ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.26-7.

Canterbury Cathedral. Bishops Samuel Horsley and Beilby Porteous privately recorded their antipathy in early 1790.²⁶ From late 1792 onwards, however, Establishment clergy were largely united in their condemnation of the Revolution for its violent overthrow of Church and State, and for its assault on public and private morality.²⁷

Given their fear of popular disorder and revolt, their anxiety concerning Church-State relations and their condemnation of the theories and practices of the French Revolution, Establishment churchmen were largely loyal to the government. 'From what I can learn,' Dundas told Pitt in 1794, 'the [Scottish] clergy with very few exceptions are all right in their dispositions.'²⁸ Resolutions and addresses were passed throughout Britain at the national, presbytery or diocesan, and parish levels;²⁹ loyalty was preached; and radical tendencies among parishioners were checked if possible. Preachers defended not only the British constitution but also the current

²⁶ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', p.19; idem., *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.161-2.

²⁷ See, for instance, Hampson, *Observations on the Present War*, pp.27-9; [Robert Nares], *A Short Account of the Character and Reign of Louis XVI* (London, 1793), p.17; Samuel Horsley, *A Sermon, Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, on Wednesday, January 30, 1793: Being the Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First. With an Appendix Concerning the Political Principles of Calvin* (2nd edition: London, 1793), pp.22-5; Edward Vernon, *A Sermon Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in the Abbey Church of St. Peter, Westminster, on Thursday, 30 January, 1794, Being The Anniversary of the Martyrdom of King Charles the First* (London, 1794); Brown, 'A View of the Present Times', pp.475-8; Watson, 'Charge to the Clergy of Llandaff', pp.143-4; Henry Gabell, *A Discourse Delivered on the Fast-Day in February 1799, in the Church of St. Lawrence, Winchester* (2nd edition: London, 1799), pp.5-24; William Vincent, 'A Sermon Preached Before the Honourable House of Commons, at the Church of St. Margaret, Westminster, on Tuesday, June 1, 1802, Being the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving', in *Sermons on Faith, Doctrines, and Public Duties* (2 vols.: London, 1817), i, 328-33.

²⁸ Chatham Papers, PRO 30/8/157/1/144, quoted in Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.179. See also Richard Munkhouse, *A Sermon, Preached in the Church of St. John Baptist, Wakefield, on Thursday, November 29th, 1798; Being the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God* (London, 1799), pp.28-30.

²⁹ See those from the clergy of Leeds, Aberbrothock (Arbroath), Penport, Oxford, London and Westminster, Glasgow, Gloucester, Bangor, Hereford, Dorchester, Dundee, Horsham, Canterbury, York, Bath and Wells, St. Asaph, Worcester, Carlisle, Bristol, St. David, Lichfield and Coventry, Peterborough, Llandaff, Rochester, Fordoun, Lincoln, Southwell, Hamilton, Ely, Norwich, Cleveland, Salisbury, Dingwall, Durham, Hull and the East Riding, Chester, St. Andrews, in the *London Gazette* for July - August 1792. In 1793, also in the *London Gazette*, the following bodies of clergy are recorded as having sent loyal addresses: the presbyteries of Deer, Duns, Elgin, Lauder and the General Assembly. After the attack on the King on 29 October 1795, loyal addresses were received from Establishment clergy in Glasgow, St. Andrews, Paisley, Dundee, Lichfield Cathedral, the Church of St. Peter (Westminster), Dunblane, Perth, Aberdeen, Irvine, Turriff, Wigton, Lanark, Hamilton, Dunfermline, Lauder, Kirkcaldy, Worcester, Hereford, Ely, Bangor, York, Bristol, Rochester, Winchester, St. David's, Chester, Ayr, Fordyce, Fordoun, Dunkeld, Tain, Carlisle, Peterborough, Chichester, Gloucester, Llandaff, Selkirk, Inverness, Stirling, Strathbogie and Stranraer. In 1796: St. Asaph, Bath and Wells, Durham, Exeter, Aberbrothock (Arbroath), Cupar and Forfar. In 1800: the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Lichfield, London and Westminster, York, Canterbury, Ely, Bristol, Durham, Cleveland, Peterborough, Chichester, Hereford, Llandaff, Exeter, Gloucester, Rochester, St. Asaph, Winchester, Bath and Wells, Worcester, Bangor, St. Davids, Norwich, the East Riding, Salisbury, Chester and Lincoln.

administration and its policies, and they argued that political reform might well be possible later, at a more opportune time, so benevolent and virtuous was the present government.

The war against revolutionary France was interpreted by Establishment churchmen from both Burkean and purely theological standpoints. Burke's writings greatly influenced the view which saw the French Revolution as particularly concerned to destroy religion and ecclesiastical institutions and, thereby, all social restraint and public order.³⁰ Most of the rest of Burke's analysis was also accepted. The French revolutionaries were described as inherently evil men ('*enthusiasts in wickedness*', Dr. Thomas Horne insisted), propagating principles destructive of all civilization and harmony.³¹ The conflict was therefore ideological in nature. Britain was fighting to defend all right and just principles of religion, society and government. It was, said Robert Nares, 'a War to assert your Right to do your Duty, and obey the Will of God.'³² Most Establishment ministers had little difficulty in arguing that it was a just and necessary war: it had been undertaken in self-defence against revolutionary armies with a mission to subvert all order, government, religion and property in Britain and throughout Europe by force.³³ The General Assembly regularly declared to the King their 'full approbation of this necessary exertion of

³⁰ Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.151-2.

³¹ Horne, *Sermon Before the Chiswick Military Association*, p.7. See also Hampson, *Observations on the Present War*, pp.10-11, 58-60; idem., *A Sermon Preached in St. John's Chapel, Sunderland, on Friday, April 19, 1793, Being the Day Appointed for a General Fast* (Sunderland, 1793), pp.11-12; Nickolls, *The Duty of Supporting and Defending Our Country and Constitution*, pp.i-ix, 6-12; John Owen, *Righteous Judgement. A Sermon Preached in the University Church of Great St. Mary's, before the Hon. Sir W. Ashurst, Knt. on the 11th March 1794, Being the Day of Assize* (Cambridge, 1794), pp.16-17; Thomas Rennell, *Principles of French Republicanism essentially founded on Violence and Blood-Guiltiness, A Sermon, preached on Sunday, the 26th October, 1793, in the Cathedral Church of Winchester, Occasioned by the Murder of Her Most Christian Majesty* (Winton, 1793), p.27; Brown, 'The Spirit of the Times Considered', pp.18-23.

³² Robert Nares, *Man's Best Right: A Solemn Appeal in the Name of Religion* (London, 1793), pp.45-7. See also Vincent, 'Sermon on June 1, 1802, for a General Thanksgiving', pp.326-7; Munkhouse, *Sermon on November 29th, 1798, for a General Thanksgiving*, pp.46-7.

³³ Hampson, *Observations on the Present War*, pp.6-9, 15-16, 36-41; idem., *Sermon on April 19, 1793, for a General Fast*, pp.12-13, 15-16; Nickolls, *The Duty of Supporting and Defending our Country and Constitution*, dedication, p.30; William Jackson, *A Sermon, Preached Before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, on Wednesday, February 25, 1795; Being the Day appointed by His Majesty's Proclamation for a General Fast* (Oxford, 1795), pp.6-8; Moss, *Fast Sermon Before the House of Commons*, pp.21-2; Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations*, pp.22-5; Samuel Clapham, *A Sermon, Preached at Great Ouseborne, on Tuesday, the 19th of December, 1797, Being the Day Appointed by His Majesty for a General Thanksgiving, to Almighty God, for our Naval Victories* (Leeds, 1798), pp.8-22; J. Gardiner, *A Sermon Delivered at the Octagon Chapel, Bath, on Thursday, Nov. 29, 1798, Being the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving* (Bath, 1798), pp.12-13; David Rivers, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Prosecuting the War with France with Vigour and Energy: With Remarks on the Scarcity of Provisions, and Particularly Bread. In a Letter to a Friend* (London, 1800), pp.8-15; Vincent, 'Sermon Before the Associated Volunteer Companies'; P.H., xxxi, 1279, the Bishop of Durham, 27 January 1795. See also Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.149-50.

public force'. Richard Watson, who, as late as 1795, was voicing doubts in the House of Lords concerning the justification for the war, published his view in 1798 that, since the French had refused to make peace in 1796 and 1797, their threat towards Britain had been made plain and the war had become just and unavoidable.³⁴

Preachers called also, however, for reflection and meditation on current affairs in the light of Scripture, for a proper discernment of 'the signs of the times'. It was important, insisted William Jackson, to learn 'not from the imaginations of our own hearts, but from the word of God, the fit estimates which humility and piety will lead us to make', concerning European events.³⁵ The opposition was often described in terms of spiritual enmity, the embodiment of hostility and evil, against which only steady virtue and faithfulness could prevail.³⁶ The Rev. J. Clowes, rector of St. John's Church, Manchester, urged upon his congregation the importance of recognizing the truth and reality of the world invisible: 'Thus the destruction which now threatens us, is a *double* destruction; it is the destruction both of our *bodies* and of our *souls*... For it is a contest of the folly which rejects a GOD, against the wisdom which acknowledges him...'.³⁷ Many subscribed to the conspiracy theory first hinted at by Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in 1790 and developed by the Abbé Barruel and by Professor John Robison of Edinburgh University in 1797, of the French Revolution having been hatched by continental philosophers plotting against the Christian religion. Bishop Randolph of Oxford, according to Robert Hole, 'was exceptional among the establishment in being somewhat sceptical about it.'³⁸ Some,

³⁴ 'Address to His Majesty on the subject of the present War' (1794) in the *Acts of the General Assembly* (Edinburgh); *P.H.*, xxxi, 1258, Watson, 27 January 1795; Richard Watson, *An Address to the People of Great Britain* (London, 1798), p.11.

³⁵ Jackson, *Sermon Before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn*, p.5. See also Owen, *Righteous Judgement*, pp.18-19, 23-5; Brown, *The Spirit of the Times Considered*.

³⁶ Compare *Ephesians* 6:12: 'For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.'

³⁷ J. Clowes, *The Protection-Mark, or a View of the Principles Most Conducive to National and Individual Security, at this Most Important Crisis, Considered in a Sermon Preached at St. John's Church, Manchester, on Wednesday the 27th of February, Being the Day Appointed for a Public Fast* (Manchester, 1799), pp.7-10. See also William Agutter, *Observations on the General Fast of the Year 1796* (London, 1796), p.12; Weeden Butler, *Philanthropy, Religion, and Loyalty, the Best Characteristicks of a Christian Soldier. A Sermon, Addressed to the Armed Association of the Parish of Saint Luke, Chelsea, and to the Inhabitants at Large, on Sunday, 8th July 1798* (London, 1798), pp.10-18.

³⁸ See John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy Against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Free Masons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies—collected from good authorities* (Edinburgh, 1797); Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.154. See also, for instance, James Thompson, *The Rise, Progress, and Consequences of the New Opinions and Principles Lately Introduced into France, with Observations* (Edinburgh, 1799); Watson, *Address to the People of Great Britain*, p.27.

displaying a degree of paranoia, thought that the Dissenters and Methodists were also participants, for the sake of destroying the power of the Established Churches.³⁹

The doctrine of Providence was applied to the war by almost every sermon preached on it. 'I am grieved to observe,' wrote the Rev. Thomas Robinson, 'that the attention of many is fixed only on second causes; as if the War ought not to be considered in the light of a dispensation from God, since it may have originated from the wrong administration of our public affairs.'⁴⁰ The conflict had begun and would only end at the instance of God. Charles Moss explained that human passions often required strong and painful correctives, which were applied by the Providence of God to save individuals and nations from self-inflicted ruin.⁴¹ 'Methinks all Europe, or what we call Christendom, is a great Augean stable,' John Newton wrote to William Wilberforce. 'God has sent His scavengers into it; and when they have performed the dirty work according to His will, He will let them know that while they thought they were only pleasing themselves, they were doing what He appointed to be done.'⁴² Furthermore, God controlled not only the beginning and end of the conflict, but also its procedure. The Form of Prayer appointed for the Fast Day on 8 March 1797, acknowledging the defeat by stormy weather of the French attempt to invade Ireland, thanked Him for 'what appears to us a Providential Interference—when the Winds and Storms, fulfilling Thy Word, dissipated that mighty Armament, which threatened the Peace of our Sister Kingdom'.⁴³

It was a short step from this to claim that God was on Britain's side. 'In thy name we wish to set up the banners, which we now solemnly dedicate to thy service and to thy glory,' prayed Richard Valpy, in his capacity as chaplain to various loyal associations and cavalry and Volunteer corps in Reading. 'Should the enemy assail our country, O strengthen us with thy divine influence. Go before our hosts in a pillar

³⁹ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.58-9, 75-6; Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.170-2.

⁴⁰ Thomas Robinson, *A Serious Exhortation to the Inhabitants of Great Britain with Reference to the Approaching Fast* (first published Leicester, 1795; this edition, Edinburgh, 1797), p.10. See also Newton, *Motives to Humiliation and Praise*, pp.7, 27-35; *A Sermon, Composed for the Late General Fast*, pp.1-7; Brown, 'A View of the Present Times', p.480.

⁴¹ Moss, *Fast Sermon Before the House of Commons*, p.11. See also Jackson, *Sermon Before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn*, pp.9-11; Rivers, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Prosecuting the War with Vigour*, p.8; Hay, *Sermon Before the House of Commons* (1794), pp.29-30.

⁴² Magee, *Sermon in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin*, pp.14-15; R.I. and S. Wilberforce (eds.), *The Correspondence of William Wilberforce* (2 vols.: London, 1840) i, 158, Newton to Wilberforce, 21 April 1797.

⁴³ *A Form of Prayer To Be Used In all Churches and Chapels...upon...the Eighth of March next, being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a General FAST and Humiliation before Almighty God* (London, 1797), p.9.

of cloud by day, and by night in a pillar of fire.’⁴⁴ Many saw Britain as the new Israel, God’s favoured nation. The Rev. John Hampson of Sunderland, preaching on the reign of good King Hezekiah, a time when Israel was threatened by the ferocious Assyrian troops of Sennacherib, asked his congregation:

Is there any man so blind as not to perceive the parallel? or can anything be more congenial than the language of this blasphemous Assyrian and that of our modern Reformers upon the Continent? Judea was invaded in the reign of one of its best princes, and in the moment of its prosperity. This Country was never more wisely and mildly governed, nor was it ever so prosperous as on the eve of the present war.⁴⁵

The identification of Britain with Old Testament Israel was also taken seriously, at least as a tool of propaganda, by the highest religious and secular authorities. When George III went to St. Paul’s Cathedral in December 1797 to offer thanks for the naval victories gained by the British fleet, the parallel was made visual. Military banners captured from the defeated French were brought to the Cathedral by the King to testify to God’s goodness to Britain in direct imitation of David, King of Israel, who had once laid the spoils of his victories before the Lord in the Temple at Jerusalem.⁴⁶

Many Establishment ministers believed that the Providential purpose of the war was to chasten an immoral and irreligious France and, by so doing, to serve a warning to the rest of Europe.⁴⁷ Following Scriptural precedent, however, many also thought that France was being used as the divine scourge for the rest of Europe, while

⁴⁴ Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations*, pp.1-2. See also Hardy, *Fidelity to the British Constitution*, p.34; Rennell, *Principles of French Republicanism*, p.19.

⁴⁵ Hampson, *Sermon on April 19, 1793, for a General Thanksgiving*, p.8. See also Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations*, p.18; John Moir, *Irreligion the Stigma of Our Public Profession, and the Source of Our National Calamities. A Sermon, preached the 27th of February, 1799, in the Parish Church of St. Dionis, Backchurch, Langbourne Ward* (London, 1799), pp.5-6; Madan, *Sermon Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal*, pp.19-20; Richard Munkhouse, *A Sermon, Preached in the Church of St. John Baptist, Wakefield, December 19th, 1797, On occasion of a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God* (London, 1798), pp.15-17; Magee, *Sermon in the Chapel of Trinity College, Dublin*, pp.28-9; Gardiner, *Sermon at the Octagon Chapel, Bath*, pp.13-32; Morgan, *Sermon on 29th November, 1798, to Return Thanks*, p.5; W.H. Reynell, *Two Sermons Preached to a Respectable Congregation at Hornchurch, in the County of Essex* (London, 1798), p.9; Alexander Black, *National Blessings Considered and Improved, in a Sermon, preached on Thursday, November 29, 1798* (Edinburgh, 1798), p.39; Vincent, ‘Sermon on 1 June, 1802, for a General Thanksgiving’, pp.341-2. See also Murray, ‘The Influence of the French Revolution’, p.30; Colley, *Britons*, pp.28-30, 43-4.

⁴⁶ This was spelled out in the *Form of Prayer To Be Used In all Churches and Chapels throughout...England and Wales...upon...Tuesday, the Nineteenth of December next, being the Day appointed by Proclamation for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God* (London, 1797), p.6.

⁴⁷ Hampson, *Sermon on April 19, 1793, for a General Fast*, p.14; Rennell, *Principles of French Republicanism*, pp.3-4, 26; Nares, *Man’s Best Right*, pp.15-16; Brown, ‘A View of the Present Times’, p.484; Vincent, ‘Sermon Before the House of Commons’, p.350.

suffering punishment for its own iniquities.⁴⁸ This seemed a sufficient explanation for Britain's lack of military success in the war, and it in turn was explained by Britain's own immorality and irreligion.⁴⁹ William Agutter listed perjury, blasphemy, duelling, 'notorious sedition and secret treason', 'the want of subordination in all ranks of society' and neglect of religion as some of the sins rife within Britain which made it an object of the divine wrath. John Newton added persecution of Methodists, the oppression of native peoples in British colonies, national pride and vanity, and the slave trade (in which, as he admitted, he had once played a very active part).⁵⁰

With these views on the war, most Establishment churchmen had no hesitation in calling for religion, virtue, loyalty and patriotism to be practised by the British people. The British ought to be grateful to God for their peculiar status as his favoured nation, which secured to them social harmony and blessing through their constitution, and it was insisted that 'A people eminently distinguished by the favour of heaven, ought certainly to be a religious people.'⁵¹ Churchmen called for fasting, repentance and reformation, since it was clear to them that many in Britain fell far short of these virtuous standards.⁵² Fast Days were appointed by the King and his Privy Council, and were an established part of British war efforts in the eighteenth century. As J.E. Cookson has written, 'There may well have been no other occasions when the Anglican establishment was so fully mobilized on behalf of the state', nor, it may be

⁴⁸ Henry-Reginald Courtenay, *A Sermon, Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, in the Abbey-Church, Westminster, on Wednesday, February 25, 1795, Being the Day appointed by His Majesty's Proclamation for a General Fast* (London, 1795), p.10. See also William Agutter, *Deliverance From Enemies, A Ground for Thanksgiving. A Sermon, preached on the Day of General Thanksgiving, December 19th, 1797, in the Chapel of the Asylum for Female Orphans* (London, 1798), pp.13-14; Brown, *The Influence of Religion on National Prosperity*, p.43; *A Sermon, Composed for the Late General Fast*, pp.8-17.

⁴⁹ Moir, *Irreligion the Stigma of our Public Profession, and the Source of Our National Calamities*, p.7. See also Jackson, *Sermon Before the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn*, pp.12-13; Moss, *Fast Sermon Before the House of Commons*, pp.12-13, 16; Newton, *Motives to Humiliation and Praise*, p.6; Reynell, *Two Sermons*, p.22; James Landon, *A Sermon Preached Before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, January 30, 1800* (Oxford, 1800), pp.26-7. On Britain's lack of military success, see Hampson, *Observations on the Present War*, pp.55-7; Moss, *Sermon Before the House of Commons*, pp.14-15, 17; Shute Barrington, *A Fast Sermon for February the 27th, 1799, from Isaiah, Chapter x, verse 5* (London, 1799), pp.7-8.

⁵⁰ Agutter, *Observations on the General Fast of the Year 1796*, p.8; Newton, *Motives to Humiliation and Praise*, pp.7-25.

⁵¹ Agutter, *Deliverance from Enemies*, pp.3-4, 12-13; quotation from Black, *National Blessings*, pp.27-8. On the superiority of Christianity to revolutionary political doctrines, see also Nares, *Man's Best Right*; Nickolls, *The Duty of Supporting and Defending Our Country and Constitution*, p.ix; Watson, *Charge to the Clergy of Llandaff*, pp.148-52; Hampson, *Sermon on April 19, 1793, for a General Fast*, pp.9-10; idem., *A Sermon Delivered on Thursday the 1st of January, 1801, Before the Sunderland Loyal Volunteer Infantry* (Sunderland, 1801), pp.20-4; Hay, *Sermon Before the House of Commons* (1794), p.25; Reynell, *Two Sermons*, pp.10-12.

⁵² Reynell, *Two Sermons*, p.8; Moir, *Irreligion the Stigma of Our Public Profession*, pp.9-12; Clapham, *Sermon at Great Ouseborne*, pp.23-5.

added, the Presbyterian establishment in Scotland.⁵³ Ministers pointed to instances in Scripture where God withdrew His wrath and prevented disasters from happening to people in response to their repentance and fasting, such as the Ninevites under the influence of Jonah's preaching, and drew the conclusion that similar measures now might stay the divine chastening presently upon Britain.⁵⁴

Unsurprisingly, churchmen were among the most vocal of the loyalists anxious about Britain's moral state in the late eighteenth century. The propertied classes, it was insisted, must set a good example, and they should observe religious principles in their government of the country, warned by the example of the 'woeful effects' of the irreligion of the philosophers and people of fashion in 'a neighbouring country'.⁵⁵ Evangelicals and Methodists in particular vigorously criticized the irreligion and extravagance of the upper classes.⁵⁶ Gerald Newman has seen an 'Evangelical anti-conspiracy' in this movement for moral reformation: 'The "reaction against the French Revolution" was genuine enough, but it also marvelously camouflaged those moral revolutionaries who, following John Brown, had thirsted for decades to transform, nationalize, level, and make uniform their country's institutions.'⁵⁷ It seems more likely, however, that while some may have enjoyed having a self-righteous dig at the elite, most of the preaching against upper-class idleness and conspicuous over-consumption was rooted in simple moral outrage. Establishment churchmen, orthodox, high, or Evangelical, feared rather than favoured social levelling. Given their belief that religion was crucial to the upholding of the social order and public peace, and that the war was the result of divine wrath, their concern for the political, moral and religious purity of the population caused ministers great anxiety, and many taught that 'virtuous and moral behavior was not only necessary for survival and victory, but was the patriotic obligation of every British subject'. Only a few could help their country by fighting for it or by advising its rulers; everyone could help it by practising religion, loyalty and virtue.⁵⁸

⁵³ Cookson, *The Friends of Peace*, p.134.

⁵⁴ Robinson, *A Serious Exhortation*, pp.4-6, 17-18; Newton, *Motives to Humiliation and Praise*, pp.26-7. See also *A Sermon, Composed for the Late General Fast*, pp.20-1; Clowes, *The Protection-Mark*, pp.19-20; Courtenay, *Sermon Before the House of Lords*; Barrington, *Fast Sermon for February the 27th, 1799*; *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, i, 157, Newton to Wilberforce, 21 April 1797.

⁵⁵ Brown, 'A View of the Present Times', p.496; Carlyle, *Love of Our Country*, p.24; Hunter, *A Due Attention*.

⁵⁶ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', p.282, 285; William Stafford, 'Religion and the Doctrine of Nationalism in England at the Time of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars', *Studies in Church History*, 18 (1982), 386-8; Erskine, *Fatal Consequences*, p.25; Hardy, *Importance of Religion*, pp.14, 24-32.

⁵⁷ Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, p.235.

⁵⁸ Quotation from Soloway, 'Reform or Ruin', p.120; Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.167-8, 287-8. See Hugh Blair, 'On the Love of Our Country', (Edinburgh, 1793), in

Having called for diligence in religion and virtue, then, most Establishment ministers also preached loyalty, both as a motivation to virtue and as a particular virtue.⁵⁹ It was the duty of every good British citizen not only to practise Christianity faithfully, but also 'to abhor the opinions and conduct of the fanatical sect [of French revolutionaries], and to oppose them to the utmost of his power', and 'to strengthen the hands of government by yielding a willing and ready obedience to his lawful superiors'.⁶⁰ The blessings of living under the British constitution were underlined, and it was explained that, in return for the protection of their lives and property, men owed submission and obedience to the government.⁶¹ Radicalism, rebellion and revolution were regularly condemned, and the point was heavily emphasized that ordinary people rarely benefited from them and often suffered as a result. Richard Munkhouse went so far as to insist that the common people had 'no immediate concern' with matters of political administration, and that they ought not to interfere with or even discuss them, since they were 'alike far beyond the sphere of their action, and above the reach of their comprehension'.⁶² While Church of England ministers by and large encouraged the establishment of Sunday Schools as a method of civilizing and restraining the lower orders, many ministers of the Church of Scotland thought them a dangerous innovation promoted by itinerant preachers (*alias* political and religious radicals) for the propagation of their evil ideas.⁶³

The monarchy was almost certainly supported by all Establishment ministers. Common texts for their political sermons were *Proverbs* 24:21: 'Fear thou the Lord, and honour the King, and meddle not with them that are given to change' and *1 Peter*

Sermons (5 vols.: London, 1818), v, 143-6; Carlyle, *Love of Our Country*, pp.15, 21-2. David Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State', pp.165-6, suggests that Evangelical war-time charity was sometimes stimulated by fears of popular unrest and intended to placate popular discontent.

⁵⁹ See Agutter, *The Faithful Christian and True Soldier*.

⁶⁰ Brown, 'The Spirit of the Times Considered', pp.23, 32.

⁶¹ Hay, *Sermon Before the House of Commons* (1793), p.17; Black, *National Blessings*, pp.5-20; Watson, *Charge to the Clergy of Llandaff*, p.142; Munkhouse, *Sermon on December 19th, 1797, for a General Thanksgiving*, p.11; Gardiner, *Sermon at the Octagon Chapel*, pp.8-9; Brown, 'A View of the Present Times', pp.494-6.

⁶² Munkhouse, *Sermon on November 29th, 1798, for a General Thanksgiving*, p.19. See also 'The General Assembly's dutiful Address to His Majesty, on the subject of the present War' (1794), and 'Addresses to His Majesty on the present Situation of Public Affairs' (1798), in *The Acts of the General Assembly*; P.H., xxxi, 1260-1, Watson, 27 January 1795; Watson, *Charge to the Clergy of Llandaff*, pp.143, 135-6.

⁶³ For Church of England support of Sunday Schools, see: Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.61; Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', p.273; Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.139, 167. For Church of Scotland disapproval, see: Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.181; Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.204-5; BMC 9435, John Kay, 'Modern Moderation Strikingly Displayed or a Ministerial Visitation of a Sabbath Evening School' (1799); 'Declaratory Act' against unqualified ministers and preachers, 'A Pastoral Admonition...to all the People under their Charge', and the report against 'Vagrant Teachers and Sunday Schools' (effectively banning all Sunday Schools held under the auspices of the Church of Scotland), in *The Acts of the General Assembly* (Edinburgh, 1799), pp.12-14, 38-42, 42-5.

2:17: 'Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the King'. Sermons were still being preached before the Houses of Commons and Lords respectively on 30 January in 1786-91 and 1793-5 to commemorate the so-called 'martyrdom' of Charles I, thus reinforcing the value attached to the monarchy by the Church of England.⁶⁴ The clergymen appointed to preach before MPs and peers in 1793-5 did not miss the opportunity to draw the parallel between the execution of Charles I and that more recently of Louis XVI, and to emphasize the heinousness of the crime of regicide.⁶⁵

Finally, along with religion, virtue and loyalty, Establishment ministers exhorted their congregations to practise patriotism. Religion and loyal national unity were the aims and fruits of true patriotism, said Nickolls, expounding *Psalm 122:3* ('Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up...'). 'Our Jerusalem *demands* and deserves our prayers: she looks to *you*, her dutiful and virtuous sons, to maintain her cause against those of her family who have gone over to the enemy.'⁶⁶ Hugh Blair of Edinburgh and Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk both preached sermons entitled *On the Love of our Country* after Richard Price's famous discourse of 1789, arguing the very opposite to his exhortation to world citizenship; to love the French as much as the British, scorned Blair, would be like loving strangers as much as one's own wife and children. British subjects had excellent cause to rejoice in and be proud of their country; God had planted these feelings of special concern and care for those around them in men's breasts, and it was unnatural to deny them.⁶⁷ Prayers were said to supplicate God for British victory: '...convince our enemies that we are thy people; and that thine arm, stretched out, can set at naught the most daring designs against our peace.'⁶⁸ In their efforts to inspire patriotism, ministers spoke to people's emotions as well as to their minds, appealing to all that might tug at them—family, tradition, religion, the desire for glory, fear of French

⁶⁴ The anniversary was missed in 1792 and 1796-9 because Parliament was still in recess on 30 January in those years, but interestingly it was also missed in 1800, although Parliament was sitting over 30 January that year, and the practice appears to have been more or less discontinued after that. It is interesting that a sermon was preached on 30 January 1800, but before a congregation at Oxford University instead (Landon, *Sermon Before the University of Oxford*); perhaps the practice was also continued elsewhere.

⁶⁵ Horsley, *Sermon Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal* (1793); Vernon, *Sermon Preached Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal* (1794); Madan, *Sermon Before the Lords Spiritual and Temporal* (1795); Hay, *Sermons Before the House of Commons* (1793, 1794, 1795).

⁶⁶ Nickolls, *The Duty of Supporting and Defending our Country and Constitution*, pp.16-19.

⁶⁷ Blair, *Love of our Country*, p.129. See also Hampson, *Sermon Before the Sunderland Loyal Volunteer Infantry*, pp.17-20; Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations*, pp.21-2, 25-7; Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.149. For lay use of these religious arguments, see Stafford, 'Religion and the Doctrine of Nationalism', pp.388-95.

⁶⁸ *A Form of Prayer...General Fast* (19 April 1793), pp.6, 7. See also Rennell, *Principles of French Republicanism*, p.22.

depredations, the threat of judgement, personal pride.⁶⁹ Some ministers even spoke of the war as a blessing: James Landon, Charles Moss and William Agutter believed that the magnitude of the cataclysm had awoken Britain from its state of slumber in moral decline and ingratitude for its assets, and that the war had isolated Britain from the French disease. 'As salt preserves meat from putrefaction,' wrote Agutter, 'so War has been our preservation against moral contamination: it has been our bulwark and protection.'⁷⁰

In the names of religion, virtue, loyalty and patriotism, then, ministers called civilians and soldiers alike to endurance while the war lasted. Those who remained at home were urged to pay their taxes willingly: a Briton's religious faith and political liberty ought to be even more important to him than his property, according to Munkhouse.⁷¹ They sympathized with those who suffered most from the 'scarcity' of grain and high prices, but they denied that these had been caused by the war. Prayers were said for the return of plenty, and the better-off were urged to economize on luxuries and to help the poor by making nutritious food cheaply available to them.⁷² Ministers praised highly those who enrolled in the militia, the Volunteers or the regular armed forces. Heaven's highest places, encouraged Carlyle, were reserved for those 'who have deserved well, or have died in the service of their country'.⁷³ Sermons were preached before Volunteer companies, often at services of dedication of a corps' colours, to exhort them to conduct themselves in faith and patriotism and with valour, and to commend them to the rest of the community.⁷⁴

⁶⁹ See, for instance, Rennell, *Principles of French Republicanism*, pp.19-20; Nares, *Man's Best Rights*, p.48; Agutter, *The Faithful Christian and the True Soldier*, p.18; Munkhouse, *Sermon on December 19th, 1797, for a General Thanksgiving*, pp.51-2n. Thomas Maurice, *The Crisis of Britain: A Poem, Addressed to the Right Hon. William Pitt, on the Threatened Invasion of These Kingdoms, by the French, in A.D. 1798* (1st edition, 1798; 2nd edition: London, 1803); Morgan, *Sermon on 29th November, 1798, to Return Thanks*, pp.18-22.

⁷⁰ Landon, *Sermon Before the University of Oxford*, pp.24-5; Moss, *Fast Sermon Before the House of Commons*, p.14; Agutter, *An Address to Every British Subject*, p.3.

⁷¹ Munkhouse, *Sermon on December 19th, 1797, for a General Thanksgiving*, pp.41-2. See also Somerville, *Observations on the Constitution*, pp.16-17.

⁷² *A Form of Prayer...General Fast* (13 February 1801), p.6; Rivers, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Prosecuting the War with Vigour*, pp.16-20.

⁷³ Carlyle, *Love of our Country*, p.33. See also Moir, *Irreligion the Stigma of our Public Profession*, pp.17-18; Morgan, *Sermon on 29th November, 1798, to Return Thanks*, p.23.

⁷⁴ See, for example, Butler, *Philanthropy, Religion, and Loyalty* (1798); Vincent, 'Sermon Before the Associated Volunteer Companies' (1798); Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations* (1798); W. Branch Johnson (ed.), 'Memorandums for...': *The Diary Between 1798 and 1810 of John Carrington, Farmer, Chief Constable, Tax Assessor, Surveyor of Highways and Overseer of the Poor, of Bramfield in Hertfordshire* (London and Chichester, 1973), pp.34-5, 29 November 1798; Hampson, *Sermon Before the Sunderland Loyal Volunteer Infantry* (1801). The Rev. Samuel Partridge is an example of earlier doubts among some of the conservative sector of the population in general, in his opposition to the formation of a nationwide Volunteer scheme because of the threat it might pose to the authority of the crown and government and to the liberty of the

Congregations and readers were encouraged to prepare for, but not to be afraid of, a French invasion. Ultimately, ministers claimed to place their faith in God to deliver Britain from such an incursion, but they pointed also to the public spirit of the nation, shown both in the courage and skill of the navy and home defence troops and in the general population and their love for their country.⁷⁵ Bishop Horsley told his clergy not to participate themselves in armed service, either with the regular army or with the local militia, simply because they were not likely to make good soldiers. They would do more good in the event of an invasion by supervising the evacuation of the weak and helpless and the livestock and by helping to destroy buildings in the path of the enemy. They should 'level the Musquet or trail the Pike' only in a dire emergency.⁷⁶

For all their apparent bellicosity in their loyalty to the government and in their hostility to revolutionary France, Establishment ministers, like the great majority of the population, were eager to see the restoration of peace and they reminded their listeners of the principle of loving one's enemies.⁷⁷ Many were delighted with the peace settlement at Amiens, thinking, as William Vincent did, that they had 'lived to see a great nation renounce Christianity and embrace heathenism; and again revert from heathenism, to submit once more to the empire of the Gospel'.⁷⁸ Evangelicals were particularly pleased, since they believed that Catholicism had been irreversibly overthrown in France, making clear the way for 'pure religion' once the madness of official atheism had passed, and they expressed great optimism for the future of Christianity in France until Napoleon's Concordat with the Pope was signed in 1803.⁷⁹ There were some who voiced anxiety, however. The Bishop of Rochester did not think that a real peace could last for any length of time, since the strength of French power by the settlement contained in it 'the seed and germ of everlasting wars'. He dreaded 'the revival of the spirit of Jacobinism in this country', pointing to

people, should its power be abused ('Observations on a Militia of Property', in *The Annals of Agriculture*, ed. Arthur Young, xxi (1793), 513-6).

⁷⁵ See Hampson, *Observations on the Present War*, pp.47-52; Watson, *Address to the People of Great Britain*, pp.177-20; Munkhouse, *Sermon on December 19th, 1797, for a General Thanksgiving*, pp.2-6, 12-14, 40-1.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.170. The idea of even this level of involvement 'hurried and affected' Parson Woodforde 'a great deal indeed' (Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 329, 6 August 1801).

⁷⁷ Agutter, *Deliverance from Enemies*, pp.15-16. See also *Correspondence of Wilberforce*, i, 202-4, the Dean of Carlisle to Wilberforce, 21 January 1800.

⁷⁸ Vincent, 'Sermon Before the House of Commons' (1802), pp.325-7; Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', p.355.

⁷⁹ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.279-281.

a symptom of it in those who urged Britain to concede much in order to pacify France.⁸⁰

Liberal churchmen, Evangelicals, and Methodists within the Established Churches all tended, if sometimes reluctantly, to retreat from protests and demands for ecclesiastical and political reform during the war—the liberals because of the association of religious liberalism and radicalism with political radicalism, and Evangelicals and Methodists because of their own conservative reactions to the threat to religious and secular authority posed by the armies of revolutionary France.⁸¹ Sometimes the patriotism of Evangelicals and Methodists was qualified, however. They, more than orthodox churchmen, claimed to place their trust in the prayers of Christians and the mercy of God rather than in the British government and its fleets and armies. As William Stafford explains, their strong sense of sin worked for obedience to the government but against national pride: ‘because of man’s wickedness the state is essential; but characteristically their pride in their native land is reduced by their sense of its depravity.’⁸² Evangelicals such as John Newton, Thomas Scott and Thomas Gisborne, while basically loyalist, were nevertheless suspicious of the war, because all war was harmful and destructive and because this war was undertaken in alliance with corrupt papal monarchies in part to restore Roman Catholicism in France.⁸³ They also continued to press for reforms such as the abolition of the slave trade and to acknowledge that moderate political reform was needed and should be carried through at a more opportune time.⁸⁴ It seems clear, however, that, in human terms, the Methodists could not have contained popular political radicalism to the extent that revolution was avoided in Britain because of them, as Halévy suggested: they were simply too few in number to have been effective in this way all over Britain.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ *P.H.*, xxxvi, 179-182, the Bishop of Rochester, 3 November 1801.

⁸¹ Murray, ‘The Influence of the French Revolution’, pp.80, 95, 110-1, 119, 263-8, 274; H.W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (Glasgow, 1912), p.203; William Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh, 1965), p.228; I.D.L. Clark, ‘From Protest to Reaction: the Moderate Regime in the Church of Scotland, 1752-1805’, in N.T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (eds.), *Scotland in the Age of Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1970), p.211; Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, pp.181-2.

⁸² Stafford, ‘Religion and the Doctrine of Nationalism’, pp.386-8.

⁸³ Murray, ‘The Influence of the French Revolution’, pp.276-7.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Erskine, *Fatal Consequences*, p.18.

⁸⁵ John Ehrman estimates that there were fewer than 160 000 members and adherents of Methodism in 1791 nationwide (Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.158-9); and there were very few in Scotland, where Wesley’s high Anglican views clashed too strongly with Scottish Calvinism and presbyterianism to be widely embraced. See also E.J. Hobsbawm, ‘Methodism and the Threat of Revolution’, *History Today*, (1957), 115-24; Roger Wells, ‘English Society and Revolutionary Politics in the 1790s: the case for insurrection’, in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, p.196.

It is also true that a minority of Establishment ministers opposed the British wars against revolutionary France in the 1790s. The Rev. J.H. Williams, vicar of Wellsbourn in Warwickshire, was not convinced that the political state and order either of Europe or of Britain had warranted it, and he pointed out that even if it was favoured by general consent, it was not true that the opinion of the majority was always right. War caused gross damage to the morals of individuals and of nations: it attacked piety, fostered hatred, threatened loyalty to the government and King and was generally hostile to the spirit of the gospel.⁸⁶ Vicesimus Knox also opposed the war until late 1795 (when he became convinced that the French were the real aggressors), deeming it unjust and unnecessary and, like all wars, hostile to Christian teaching and national morality and integrity—‘as well might oil and vinegar coalesce as war and Christianity’.⁸⁷ The Rev. J. Bradley Rhys wrote a tract arguing that ‘War, *at all times*, and *in all cases*, is absolutely unlawful for Christians.’ Even Richard Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, told the House of Lords in 1795 that he considered ‘the justifiable occasions of going to war to be few, very few, indeed’, and he thought that Britain ought to have attempted to mediate between France and the German powers in 1792.⁸⁸

These ministers sometimes thought that religion was being used for secular political purposes, and they were indignant. They disagreed with the obligation they felt themselves under to display political loyalty and, in particular, to conduct Fast Day services for the support of the war. Knox said that this was an odious rendering of religion subservient to secular ambition, and J.H. Williams deeply resented ‘the not being suffered to do our own business in our own way.’⁸⁹ It was wrong to go to war for the sake of religion, according to Knox and Watson, even if the French were attempting to destroy Christianity. It would be better to try to convert them than to kill them.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ J.H. Williams, *Two Sermons Preached on the Public Fasts of April 1793 and February 1794* (London, 1794), pp.22-64.

⁸⁷ See Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.222-3. Vicesimus Knox, ‘The Prospect of Perpetual and Universal Peace to be Established on the Principles of Christian Philanthropy’ (1793), in *Works* (7 vols.: London, 1824), vi, 351-70; idem., ‘Preface’ to ‘Antipolemus; or, the Plea of Reason, Religion, and Humanity, Against War. A Fragment; Translated from the Latin of Erasmus’ (1795), in *Works*, v, 405-30; idem., ‘The Spirit of Despotism’, in *Works*, v, 199-203, 249-254, 284-351, 390-3. Quotation from ‘The Spirit of Despotism’, p.391.

⁸⁸ J. Bradley Rhys, *An Answer from some Passages in a Letter from the Bishop of Rochester to the Clergy, upon the Lawfulness of Defensive War, By A Clergyman of the Church of England* (London, 1798), p.6; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1258-68, the Bishop of Llandaff, 27 January 1795.

⁸⁹ Knox, ‘Preface’ to ‘Antipolemus’, p.421; Williams, *Two Sermons*, pp.vi, vii.

⁹⁰ Knox, ‘Preface’ to ‘Antipolemus’, p.419; *P.H.*, xxxi, 1267, the Bishop of Llandaff, 27 January 1795.

Nevertheless, the great majority of Establishment churchmen remained loyal to the government and supported it in its war against revolutionary France, for reasons of theological doctrine, ecclesiastical concerns, political inclination and social identity, and they constituted a major instrument of propaganda in encouraging their congregations and readership to do likewise.

II

Although rational Dissent declined in England in the 1790s, both in numerical terms and in terms of the fears it held for the orthodox Establishment,⁹¹ Evangelical Dissent enjoyed considerable growth, both in England and in Scotland. Between 1788 and 1794, 1872 Dissenting meeting-houses were registered in England and 610 Dissenting licences to preach were granted at quarter-sessions. Between 1795 and 1801, the figures were 3378 and 1318 respectively.⁹² 'Dissent' in Scotland is more accurately divided into 'Secession' (Burghers, Anti-Burghers, Relief Church and Reformed Presbyterians) and 'Dissent' (Episcopalians, Roman Catholics, Baptists, Independents and Methodists), reflecting the distinction between those churches which split from Established presbyterian government only after 1690 and retained some degree of similarity in terms of doctrine and church government, and those which had never been part of it and which were organized along quite different lines. Seceders constituted about 10% of the Scottish population—nearly 150 000—Episcopalians many fewer, supporting only forty priests and four bishops in 1784, Catholics numbering around 30 000 in 1800 (also with forty priests and only two bishops), and the others perhaps 4000 in total, of whom the Baptists probably formed the majority. Rational Dissent actually grew in Scotland in the 1790s, with the first Unitarian congregation established in Montrose in 1792, and spreading to Dundee, Forfar and Arbroath in 1795.⁹³

Denominational politics were even more significant in determining the attitudes of Dissenters to the war than they were in forming those of Establishment ministers.⁹⁴ Many were, despite their dislike for what they believed to be a powerful and corrupt

⁹¹ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.153-4, 160.

⁹² Ibid., p.201; Deryck Lovegrove, 'English Evangelical Dissent and the European Conflict 1789-1815', in W.J. Shields (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, (Oxford, 1983), xx, 263.

⁹³ Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition', p.51; idem., 'The Scottish Democratic Movement', p.38; G. Struthers, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Principles of the Relief Church* (Glasgow, 1843), p.408; A. Bellesheim, *History of the Catholic Church of Scotland* (4 vols.: Edinburgh and London, 1887), iv, 262.

⁹⁴ See Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', pp.32, 33-4; Wells, 'English Society and Revolutionary Politics', pp.197-200.

Establishment, sufficiently disturbed by the political and religious radicalism of some within their own sect or denomination or of those in rival sects to give limited support to the political and religious authorities during the war. The identification of the Establishment with government policies, however, tempted others to woo the support of political dissenters and, in so doing, they became more politically nonconformist themselves. In the case of the New, or Kilhamite, Methodist Connexion, this meant splitting away from the Church of England and the Methodist body within the Establishment.⁹⁵

The opinions of Dissenting ministers on the war were also greatly influenced by the fact that they were often viewed with suspicion by the government and treated as scapegoats by the Established Church. Sir William Murray of Ochtertyre told the Duke of Atholl that the assessment to be drawn up of the political sympathies of people living in his district would have all Dissenters marked 'S' for suspected democrat, except those known personally to be loyal. Michael Fry cites a comment of Henry Dundas along the same lines: 'The established clergy are as well as I could wish, I would be happy if I could say the same with regard to those not of the establishment, or of the people under their charge.'⁹⁶ The Baptist minister Robert Hall objected to 'the extreme tenderness' shown by Bishop Horsley towards the overthrown Catholic Church of France when viewed alongside 'his malignity towards dissenters'.⁹⁷

In fact, however, a majority of Dissenters were not gratified by the French Revolution after its initial stages.⁹⁸ John Young, anti-Burgher minister of Hawick, like so many others, had been deeply disappointed by the degeneration of the French Revolution into violence, through the dissolution of the National Assembly, the Constitutional Assembly, which had 'acted as so many children', to the Convention, which was 'an assembly of bloodsuckers, who seemed to feast themselves with the miseries of their fellow-men.'⁹⁹ The Revolution became particularly abhorrent when it renounced Christianity. Some were convinced that the conspiracy theory of the

⁹⁵ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.142, 161-2; Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution'; Vincent, 'Responses of Scottish Churchmen'.

⁹⁶ Quoted in Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition', p.51; Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.182.

⁹⁷ Robert Hall, *An Apology for the Freedom of the Press, and for General Liberty. To which are prefixed Remarks on Bishop Horsley's Sermon, Preached on the Thirtieth of January last* (2nd edition: London, 1793), p.xiv. For a good example of Establishment suspicion that Dissenting loyalty was only skin-deep, see Rivers, *Thoughts on the Necessity of Prosecuting the War with Vigour*, pp.4-6. See also Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, pp.171-2.

⁹⁸ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', p.25; Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', p.185.

⁹⁹ John Young, *A History of the Commencement, Progress, and Termination of the Late War Between Britain and France* (Edinburgh, 1802), p.2.

Revolution was true,¹⁰⁰ and even the politically radical Dissenters of the *Analytical Review* 'found unacceptable what [they] judged to be the flippant and irresponsible manner in which French philosophers dismissed Christianity out of hand'. Even most Unitarians were part of a pious and strict nonconformist religious culture and believed that fundamental religious and moral principles should be taught to the masses.¹⁰¹

Nor were Dissenters as unwilling to prove their loyalty as the government often assumed. Leading Seceding ministers in Scotland met with Robert Dundas, the Lord Advocate, to assure him of their desire to smother radicalism in their congregations and clergy. Two loyal addresses were later sent by the Burghers, prompting Robert Dundas to remark that 'It has been with too much reason hitherto believed that the great body of these seceders, and the majority of their pastors, are as hostile to the state as to the religious establishment.' John Young and Alexander Shanks, the latter the Burgher minister of Jedburgh, were two extremely able pamphleteers who wrote for the conservative cause.¹⁰² Scottish Episcopalians could, after their Relief Act of 1792, be relied upon to support the state; but Seceders also defended the constitution and preached the importance of religion, submission and patriotism.¹⁰³ 'Give none occasion to the world, who observe you,' admonished Alexander Shanks, 'to call you an ill-humoured and ill-principled sectary, disaffected to the welfare and prosperity of that country in which you are fed and protected.'¹⁰⁴ Thus, their sermons had a two-fold purpose: to persuade their Seceding hearers and readers to be peaceful, blameless subjects in order to improve the reputation of the churches; and to convince anyone else who might read them, particularly anyone in authority, that Seceders were neither seditious nor even worthy of suspicion.

English Dissenters also regularly sent loyal addresses to the King, made public statements of their loyalty and investigated allegations of radicalism among their numbers.¹⁰⁵ Dr. Abraham Rees, referring to Nelson's victory at the Nile in August 1798, wrote:

¹⁰⁰ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', pp.29-30. See also John Young, *Essays on the Following Interesting Subjects* (Glasgow, 1794), pp.7ff.

¹⁰¹ Brian Rigby, 'Radical Spectators of the Revolution: the Case of the *Analytical Review*', in Crossley and Small, *The French Revolution and British Culture*, p.69.

¹⁰² Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.183; Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition', p.52. See also the *London Gazette* for 8-12 May 1798 and 23-27 September 1800 for the Burgher addresses.

¹⁰³ Young, *Essays*, pp.3, 15-17; [Archibald Bruce], *A Serious View of the Remarkable Providences of the Times* (Glasgow, 1795), pp.65-71.

¹⁰⁴ Alexander Shanks, *Peace and Order Recommended to Society* (Edinburgh, 1793), p.8.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, the *London Gazette* for 21-23 June 1792 (Sion College), 30 June-2 July 1792 (Protestant Dissenters of the city of Worcester), 8-11 September 1792 (Bishops and clergy of the Scottish Episcopal Church, the synod of Lothian and Tweeddale), 18-22 December 1792 (Jews of Liverpool); in late 1795, after the attack on the King on 29 October, Sion College and Roman Catholics sent addresses; after the attack on the King in May 1800, addresses were sent by Roman

I shall only add in this connection, that the late victory on the coast of Africa, so important in itself, so beneficial in its consequences, and so honourable to all who were engaged in achieving it, will bring to our grateful recollection the glorious *first* of August, which has long been celebrated as the aera of theaccession of his Majesty's family to the throne of these realms, and by none of his Majesty's most loyal subjects more sincerely and more joyfully than by PROTESTANT DISSENTERS.¹⁰⁶

Of conservative political sermons published in England between 1789 and 1802, Roman Catholics seem to have produced more than Protestant Dissenters: Gayle Trusdel Pendleton has traced 98 and 51 respectively.¹⁰⁷ Dissenting preachers, like their Anglican counterparts, emphasized the necessity of religion to the moral and social order, since a belief in God and the after-life imposed a restraint on people's actions in the present world.¹⁰⁸

With regard to the war itself, Britain was again sometimes pictured as the new Israel, God's favoured nation,¹⁰⁹ but more often the conflict was interpreted by Dissenters as the divine chastening of Britain and Europe for their irreligion and immorality. Archibald Bruce claimed to see God's hand at work, using the war as a scourge not only on Britain in general, but also on the Established Church of Scotland in particular, for its sinfulness—its spiritual tyranny, its considerations of interest and its elevation of human laws and customs above the precepts of Scripture— and he referred to the Moderates as 'a popish, prelatical, and malignant party, which hath too often prevailed over the better part'.¹¹⁰ Fasting, repentance, prayer and faithfulness to the teaching of Scripture were therefore necessary if real peace was to be restored. 'We need repentance and reformation,' warned Rees, 'and whilst the war is prolonged, we shall not be exempt from fear and danger.'¹¹¹

Catholics, Quakers, Dissenting Ministers, Jews and Protestant Dissenters of the north. See also Lovegrove, 'English Dissent and the European Conflict', pp.266-7.

¹⁰⁶ Abraham Rees, *The Privileges of Britain. A Sermon, preached at the Meeting-House in the Old Jewry on Thursday the 29th of November, 1798, being the day appointed for a General Thanksgiving* (London, 1798), p.12.

¹⁰⁷ Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.208.

¹⁰⁸ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', pp.30, 33.

¹⁰⁹ Rees, *The Privileges of Britain*, *passim*.

¹¹⁰ [Bruce], *Serious View*, p.41. See also *idem.*, *A Peaceable Declaration of the Sentiments of a Number of Presbyterians in Scotland, Relative to the War Between France and Great-Britain* (Edinburgh, 1797), p.10. See also Bicheno, *A Word in Season: or, a Call to the Inhabitants of Great Britain, to Stand for the Consequences of the Present War. Written on the Fast-Day, February 25, 1795* (London and Edinburgh, 1795), p.37; Robert Miln, *The Rise and Fatal Effects of War: A Discourse Delivered on March 28, 1794; Being the Day Appointed for a General Fast* (Carlisle, 1794), p.22.

¹¹¹ Rees, *Privileges of Britain*, pp.30-4. See also Lovegrove, 'English Dissent and European Conflict', p.268.

Many Evangelical Dissenters in fact maintained 'an almost complete silence on political matters', according to Deryck Lovegrove. James Bradley discovered no sermons on political topics published by any English Dissenters in 1796-7.¹¹² Rather than engage in political discussions and become embroiled in party allegiance, many Evangelicals chose to embrace millenarianism and, as a result, to plunge into intense evangelistic work. Not all millenarian interpretations of the French Revolution and its aftermath were as wild and fantastic as those of Joanna Southcott of Exeter, or those of the naval officer Richard Brothers, who prophesied the fall of the British monarchy if the war was continued, announced himself the Prince of the Hebrews and commanded George III in God's name to hand over his crown and authority.¹¹³ Other, more cautious and scholarly, studies were published, meditating on the likeness of the present convulsions to the events that Scripture predicted would surround the second coming of Christ.¹¹⁴ James Bicheno of Newbury published at least six works on this subject between 1793 and 1817, adapting his interpretation of biblical prophecy to events as they came to pass.¹¹⁵ Most, however, as Lovegrove comments, restricted themselves to expressing 'the more circumspect if somewhat imprecise conviction that Christ's reign was rapidly approaching'.¹¹⁶

Missions, foreign and domestic, became very popular in the wake of the French Revolution. The decline of papal power in Europe, together with the collapse of French power overseas, presented a great opportunity for missionary enterprise, and Dissenters were very actively involved in this work.¹¹⁷ In 1792 the Baptist Missionary Society was formed by William Carey, followed in 1795 by the London Missionary Society, in 1798 by the Glasgow Missionary and in 1801 by the Scottish Missionary Society.¹¹⁸ Greville Ewing and Charles Stuart, associates of Robert Haldane, the thorn in the flesh of the Church of Scotland, began to publish their *Missionary Magazine* in Edinburgh from July 1796, which enjoyed a Scottish circulation of five or six thousand; its English counterpart, also a product of the 1790s, was the *Evangelical Magazine*. Domestic missions were engaged in by Independents and Baptists in England, Charles Simeon and Rowland Hill embarking

¹¹² Lovegrove, 'English Dissent and the European conflict', pp.265-6, 276; Bradley, *Church, Clergy and Counter-Revolution*, p.6. See also Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.147.

¹¹³ Hole, *Pulpit, Politics and Public Order*, p.103.

¹¹⁴ Idem., 'English Sermons and Tracts', pp.27-8.

¹¹⁵ Lovegrove, 'English Dissent and the European Conflict', p.268. See James Bicheno, *The Signs of the Times: or the Overthrow of the Papal Tyranny in France. The Prelude of Destruction to Popery and Despotism, But of Peace to Mankind* (4th edition: London and Edinburgh, 1794); idem., *A Word in Season*.

¹¹⁶ Lovegrove, 'English Dissent and the European Conflict', p.269.

¹¹⁷ W.R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England, 1790-1850* (London, 1972), p.44.

¹¹⁸ The Church [of England] Missionary Society was established in 1799.

on long and arduous preaching tours, and by the Relief Church and the Haldane brothers in Scotland. The Haldanes established the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel at Home in 1797, James especially travelling long distances to preach the gospel throughout the most remote regions of Scotland. He began to set up independent Sunday Schools on his second tour of Scotland, after the pattern of those of John Campbell in Edinburgh, and these soon spread to most of the principal towns in Scotland, as well as to many smaller places.¹¹⁹ Unions to organize itinerant preaching were increasingly established after 1795, and Dissenting ministers and students in Huntingdonshire paid evangelistic visits to the French prisoners of war held there.¹²⁰ Sometimes gospel tracts were distributed which made direct reference to the war, such as one published in Yarmouth in 1798, entitled *An Alarm to the Public, and a Bounty Promised to Every Loyal Subject, Who Will Come Forward to Repel the Enemy. Arms and Accoutrements Provided For Every Man, Gratis*. At first sight it appears to be a simple piece of government recruiting propaganda, but it is quickly apparent from the texts printed beside each exhortation that it is rather a pamphlet recruiting for the army of Heaven.

It must also, however, be noted that even the loyalty of politically conservative Dissenters was, at best, qualified, and that a significant proportion of Nonconformists held anti-war views. By its very nature, Dissent was anti-establishment, and some ministers were quite open about their liberal or radical political views. Mark Wilks, the Norwich Baptist minister, reminded his audience in 1791 that 'Jesus Christ was a Revolutionist', and he went on to express the view that 'the French Revolution is of God, and that no power exists or can exist, by which it can be overthrown'. Robert Hall warned in 1793 that 'if the state of things continues to grow worse and worse, if the friends of reform, the true friends of their country, continue to be overwhelmed by calumny and persecution...the sun of Great Britain is set for ever.' James Bicheno and Archibald Bruce also defended the French Revolution as a battle for civil and religious liberty, and Bruce condemned the Loyal Associations as 'guilty of an outrage on the constitution of their country, as well as on the rights of their fellow-subjects', for intimidating people into acquiescing in their views and measures, and often causing disturbances of the peace in the process.¹²¹ John Young of Hawick was

¹¹⁹ Rowland Hill, *Journal of a Tour through parts of Scotland* (London, 1799); Harry Escott, *A History of Scottish Congregationalism* (Aberdeen, 1960), p.55; James Haldane, *Journal of a Tour through the Northern Counties of Scotland and the Orkney Isles* (Edinburgh, 1798); Alexander Stewart, *Account of a Late Revival in a part of the Highlands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1800).

¹²⁰ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', p.202; Lovegrove, 'English Dissent and the European Conflict', p.269.

¹²¹ Hole, 'English Sermons and Tracts', p.23; Hall, *Apology*, p.xviii; Bicheno, *Signs of the Times*, pp.38-41; Bruce, *Peaceable Declaration*, pp.ii-x; idem., *A Brief Statement and Declaration of the*

attacked, not only by his own congregation, but also at presbytery and Synod levels for his politically conservative views, expounded in his *Essays on the Following Interesting Subjects* (1794). On the other hand, Hutchison of Paisley was attacked by some in his Relief Church congregation for his enthusiasm for the rising liberties of France and his hostility to British attempts to crush them.¹²² Niel Douglas, also of the Relief Church, held reforming if not radical views, and he, together with James McEwan of Dundee, and the Anti-Burgher ministers of Methven, Kilmarnock and Montrose, attended the Edinburgh Conventions of 1792-3. The Burgher ministers of Selkirk, Shotts and Stow were on the list of political contacts of William Skirving, the secretary of the Edinburgh Association of the Friends of the People, and Hislop of Shotts was also a delegate to the first Convention. Several Seceding ministers in Perth took a prominent part in the reform movement and there, as in Paisley, Relief Church buildings were often used as meeting-places for radical reformers. Other Seceding and Dissenting ministers, such as Cross of St. Ninians and Anderson of Kilsyth, if not overt supporters of political reform, were known to be sympathetic to its cause. Unitarian preachers such as Joseph Priestley, Richard Price and Thomas Fyssh Palmer were well known advocates of reform.¹²³

Not all Dissenting ministers, therefore, supported the armed struggle against revolutionary France, and a significantly higher proportion of them openly opposed it than was the case in the Established Churches. It was argued that war was directly contrary to the teachings and spirit of Christianity and to the interests of civilization. Bruce held that 'the approved citizen of Zion is one who shutteth even his ears from hearing of blood', which was the pietistic line favoured by Quakers and anti-war Baptists.¹²⁴ Lovegrove comments that, far more common from Dissenters than expressions of support for the loyalist cause, 'were remarks of an entirely neutral character conveying only a sense of the horror of war and a belief that in the midst of the contemporary state of political upheaval and crisis the Christian's duty was to pray

Genuine Principles of Seceders, respecting Civil Government; the Duty of Subjects; and National Reformation: and a Vindication of their Conduct in reference to some late Plans and Societies for Political Reform; and the Public Dissentions of the Time. Proposed and Read in a Meeting of the General Associate Synod in Scotland (Edinburgh, 1799), p.66; Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition', pp.54-7.

¹²² Brims, 'The Covenanting Tradition', p.52; Struthers, *Relief Church*, pp.381-3.

¹²³ Niel Douglas, *Thoughts on Modern Politics* (London, 1793); William Kirkland, 'The Impact of the French Revolution on Scottish Religious Life and Thought, with special reference to Thomas Chalmers, Robert Haldane, and Niel Douglas', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1951); Brims, 'Scottish Democratic Movement', pp.105-113.

¹²⁴ Bruce, *Brief Statement*, p.61; Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p.31. See also Bruce, *A Peaceable Declaration*, pp.9-10; Miln, *The Rise and Fatal Effects of War*, pp.5, 15-21; and the Quakers' petition to the King on 27 January 1793 to ask him to intervene to prevent a war, in PRO HO/42/24/274-v.

for the return of peace and to do good wherever possible'.¹²⁵ Rational Christians, who argued that war retarded the progress of human civilization and enlightenment, appealed to the doctrine of Providence and its indication that God willed only the best for mankind, and they taught that this could only be achieved by a cooperation of human effort with divine assistance.¹²⁶ They did not always follow Richard Price and William Godwin in rejecting all sentiments of patriotism, but they often argued from love of country to love of mankind in general, rather than stopping at the shores of Britain as Establishment ministers often did. Partial affections were necessary only as concessions to man's weakness and limitations, and they ought to produce general benevolence in those who held them.¹²⁷

The main reason why some Protestant Dissenters objected particularly to the war against revolutionary France was their unshakeable anti-Catholicism.¹²⁸ They had been thrilled by the overthrow of the Catholic Church in France: as James Bicheno put it, appearances seemed to indicate 'that this will be a fatal stroke to the Papal usurpations and to the reign of despotism'. He interpreted this very specifically as the slaying of the first Beast mentioned in the book of *Revelation*. Britain had actually allied itself with the dragon (the power of Rome, now vested in the German Empire as the erstwhile Holy Roman Empire) and the second beast (the Capetian royal family of France) to restore this first beast to power, and it was therefore fighting on entirely the wrong side in this Armageddon.¹²⁹ 'And are *we!* — *protestants!* — a *free* and *enlightened* people! — engaged as principals in a war, the immediate tendency of which, if successful, is to keep popery and priestcraft from falling, and to support idolatry, persecution, and despotism?' he asked in horror.¹³⁰ Archibald Bruce took the same view, looking back with longing to the days of the Protestant alliance of Britain, Holland and Prussia.¹³¹ 'In such days of shaking and alarm,' he warned,

Protestant nations can only be safe by stedfastly maintaining the reformation they have attained...It is not in joining in affinity with the people of these abominations, it is not in attempting to prop up the crumbling heaven-struck towers, but in flying to the greatest distance from the falling and burning city, that the safety of any Protestant nation will in the event be found.¹³²

¹²⁵ Lovegrove, 'English Dissent and the European Conflict', p.267.

¹²⁶ Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p.31.

¹²⁷ Stafford, 'Religion and the Doctrine of Nationalism', pp.384-6.

¹²⁸ Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.143, 279-80.

¹²⁹ Bicheno, *Signs of the Times*, pp.iii, 19-20, 72-3, 113-4.

¹³⁰ *Idem.*, *A Word in Season*, pp.31-2.

¹³¹ [Bruce], *Serious View*, pp.7-9, 11, 13; *idem.*, *Peaceable Declaration*, pp.13-19; *idem.*, *A Penitential Epistle and Humble Supplication to His Holiness the Pope, in the Name of the People of Great-Britain, for a Perfect Reconciliation and Perpetual Alliance with Rome* (1797), p.28.

¹³² *Idem.*, *Brief Statement*, pp.79-80.

Some Establishment publications had criticized Roman Catholicism and applauded its downfall in France,¹³³ but such hostile millenarianism came mainly from Dissenters.

For these reasons, then—that all war was an evil, that this war was being fought in support of Catholicism and that it was a war in opposition to liberty—some Dissenting churchmen insisted that Britain ought to repent and withdraw from the war. ‘If we are leagued with Antichrist, and his fraternity of despots, for the support of tyranny and corruption, against the Providence of God, which has determined their overthrow, our ruin, unless we immediately withdraw ourselves, and amend our doings, is inevitable,’ warned Bicheno.¹³⁴ They protested against the use of fasting to encourage political loyalty: it was not the task of true servants of God to amuse their congregations with ‘courtly panegyrics on the excellency and purity of our government in church and state’ and ‘virulent invectives against their neighbours, whose sentiments, about public measures, may differ from their own’.¹³⁵ Instead, they used Fast Days to preach their own conviction that the war was unjust and unnecessary, which, as Cookson points out, explains why there was so little non-observance by Dissenters. Lay and clerical Dissenters played a very active role in the anti-war movement throughout the decade, and Cookson concludes that, ‘Of all the strongholds of anti-loyalism, the Dissenting congregations were the most difficult to vanquish and disperse.’¹³⁶ Expressed antipathy to the war was not the norm even among Dissenting churchmen, but it was much more common among them than it was among Establishment ministers.

III

Four main factors influenced the attitudes of British ministers of religion to the war against revolutionary France: theology, political theology, ecclesiastical politics and political ideology in response to the French Revolution. In terms of theology, most believed in a doctrine of divine sovereignty and Providence, and in the fallen-ness of human nature. Whereas this led orthodox Establishment churchmen, by and large, to

¹³³ For Establishment anti-Catholicism, see Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations*, pp.9-17, 19-20; Somerville, *Effects of the French Revolution*, p.47; also Murray, ‘The Influence of the French Revolution’, pp.96, 101-2. On the more usual Establishment lamentation concerning the hostility of the Revolution to all religion, see Murray, ‘The Influence of the French Revolution’, pp.29; Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order*, p.166; Beresford, *Diary of a Country Parson*, iii, 380, 19 October 1792; Rennell, *Principles of French Republicanism*, pp.23-4.

¹³⁴ Bicheno, *A Word in Season*, p.16. See also *ibid.*, pp.20-37; *idem.*, *Signs of the Times*, pp.115-6, 122; Bruce, *Peaceable Declaration*, pp.ii-viii, 24-5.

¹³⁵ Bicheno, *A Word in Season*, p.3. See also Miln, *The Rise and Fatal Effects of War*, pp.4-5; Bruce, *Brief Statement*, pp.63-5.

¹³⁶ Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, p.137. See chapter 4 above.

accept the inevitability of warfare and the possibility of some causes of war to be looked upon with divine favour, it led some Evangelicals and Methodists, inside and outside the Established Churches to preach the necessity of repentance and withdrawal from the sin of armed conflict. Rational Dissenters who believed in the perfectibility of man also argued that war was regressive and contrary to the divine will.

With respect to political theology, most ministers believed that the teaching of sound religious principles was of great importance to the well-being of the state. Many orthodox Establishment ministers and many radical Dissenters, Evangelical and Rational, interpreted this in such a way that they saw their present specific role in politics as being to teach a particular political ideology and its practical implications in response to the French Revolution, its principles and the war waged against it by the British government, and this issued in loyalist and anti-war teaching respectively. Some Evangelicals, on the other hand, seem to have preferred to allow the inculcation of sound religious doctrine to do its own work in forming the politics of their congregations; they made it clear that they viewed the war as a chastening from the hand of God, to which the appropriate response was moral reformation, evangelism and prayer for the return of forgiveness and peace.

Ecclesiastical politics were another major factor in the formation of churchmen's attitudes to the war. Orthodox Establishment ministers in both England and Scotland increasingly feared the advance of Evangelicalism and also believed themselves to be increasingly insecure in terms of government protection and support, and this encouraged them to voice loud support for the government and its policies during the war, in order to prove their indispensability to public order and loyalty. Some Dissenters were easily persuaded to oppose the war because its cause was embraced by the Establishment, and others because of the support that the war was seen to give to Roman Catholicism in Europe, anathema to the most reformed of the sects.

Finally, in common with the rest of the population, those ministers who continued to sympathize with the cause of the French Revolution after the war broke out (whether because of their radical or reformist political views or because of their antipathy to Catholicism) usually opposed the war, while those in whom it inspired fear concerning the survival of religion, authority and public order generally supported it. Religious radicalism of the left *or* of the right tended towards political radicalism and opposition to the war, while religious moderation or conservatism tended towards loyalism. This particularly affected Evangelicals and Methodists within the Established Churches, who retreated from 'high-flying' liberalism somewhat in order to support the Church and State against enemies foreign and internal, shelving ecclesiastical and

political reformism for the time being and emphasizing the need for nationwide moral reform. Government inducements to loyalty should not be overlooked, although it is impossible to say how many they actually persuaded to preach loyalty, since they were usually given to ministers whose inclinations were likely to have been conservative already. Henry Dundas was particularly assiduous in courting Scottish ministers of different persuasions: 'perhaps if I was to name what circumstance was of the most essential importance to the peace of the country, I would name the influence of the clergy over the people properly exercised,' he told Pitt. Moderates and Evangelicals in the Establishment received royal chaplaincies, and the Episcopal and Catholic Churches received relief and subsidies.¹³⁷

How far did their preaching affect the ordinary people? The impact of conservative and radical literature in general on public opinion will be considered in chapter 8, but the churches held a particular significance war-time as leaders and foci of national sentiment and as a source of comfort for the anxious and the bereaved, despite the gradual erosion of the influence of Establishment religion by the Enlightenment and by industrial urban growth, which had already begun.¹³⁸ The combined loyalism of the majority of the clergy of most denominations at such a time of national emergency undoubtedly had some impact. The number of published loyalist sermons was probably only a small proportion of the whole and many more taught conservative principles without referring directly to the war, or even to the French Revolution. Sermons were an unusually powerful means of communication, in that they reached the literate and illiterate alike and could claim the support of the highest possible authority. The pulpit was a most effective platform, particularly when combined with the written word. Bradley ranks the Anglican clergy with the best of politicians and government pamphleteers, and many of their Scottish counterparts could also be commended for their consistency and force of argument. Attendance was high on national Fast and Thanksgiving Days, since these were regarded as times of great symbolic significance. 'Many eighteenth-century Englishmen and women still understood society and politics in predominantly religious terms, and in times of national crisis they looked to the pulpit for a defence and reaffirmation of traditional beliefs.'¹³⁹ Printed sermons could have a wide circulation: 10 000 coarse and 1000 fine copies of George Hill's *The Present Happiness of Great Britain* (Edinburgh, 1792) were distributed.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it is open to debate how much success the

¹³⁷ Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, pp.177, 179, 180, 182; Dundas quotation on p.179.

¹³⁸ See Watson, *Charge to the Clergy of Llandaff*, pp.125-6 on this; Murray, 'The Influence of the French Revolution', pp.387-9, 395.

¹³⁹ Bradley, *Church, Clergy and Counter-Revolution*, pp.7, 16.

¹⁴⁰ Brims, 'Scottish Democratic Movement', p.357.

conservative sermons had in converting those with reformist or radical inclinations to patriotism and submission, or, on the other hand, how many otherwise loyal citizens were persuaded to oppose the war by pacifist or radical sermons. It seems likely that, in general, the most that sermons could achieve politically was to confirm people in their own attitudes by giving them Scriptural and ecclesiastical backing.

7. Women at War: British Women and the Wars Against Revolutionary France 1792-1802

As sailors in a storm throw overboard their more useless lumber, so it is but fit that the *Men* should be exposed to the dangers and hardships of war, while we remain in safety at home. They are, generally speaking, good for little else but to be our bulwarks.¹

Thus 'Sophia' (possibly the redoubtable Lady Mary Wortley Montagu) sought to justify the masculinity of the military profession, while stating her case for *Woman Not Inferior to Man* in 1739. In 1793 war was as imminent a problem for British women as it had been for 'Sophia', and one which kindled similar anxieties about gender and spheres of operation.

The difficulties of attempting to delineate the attitudes of British women to the wars against revolutionary France are largely concerned with the lack of evidence. Those women who left detailed written records of their opinions on the conflict were usually exceptional people as well as unusual women for their time, and they are few in number. Yet the question of female views on the war is important enough, though generally neglected,² to be considered seriously on the basis of what evidence there is. Their opinions were naturally often identical to those of men, but it is arguable that, whatever part of the social or political spectrum they represented, women consistently emphasized certain issues and concerns. Moreover, not only were they trying to answer the questions posed also for men by the war (issues of the grounds and aims of the war, its nature and conduct, and the question of peace) but, in a war which had a direct impact on a very wide cross-section of society over such a long period of time, they also struggled with the question of their own role in a society at war. Their very contribution to the literary debate on the war was questioned for its validity and propriety. In the decade in which Mary Wollstonecraft published her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), this controversy provided an immediate illustration of some of the issues she had raised concerning the nature and rights of women. This chapter will examine the active involvement (both traditional and innovative) of British women in the war against revolutionary France; the opinions of female writers on its grounds, nature and conduct; their views on female involvement in it; and an

¹ Quoted in Virginia Sapiro, *A Vindication of Political Virtue. The Political Theory of Mary Wollstonecraft* (Chicago and London, 1992), p.261.

² Exceptions include Linda Colley, *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale, 1992), pp.250-262; Stella M. Ni Ghallcháir Cottrell, 'English Views of France and the French, 1789-1815', unpublished D.Phil. thesis (Oxford, 1991), pp.95-146.

examination of men's attitudes towards women's participation in the war and the debates surrounding it. As Stella Cottrell has pointed out, it would be unhelpful to study women in isolation with respect to a phenomenon so intrinsically male as eighteenth-century warfare and its literature.³

I

Laetitia Matilda Hawkins claimed in her *Letters on the Female Mind* (1793) that

The whole world might be at war and yet not the rumor of it reached the ears of an Englishwoman—empires might be lost, and states overthrown, and still she might pursue the peaceful occupations of her home; and her natural lord might change his governor at pleasure, and she feel neither change nor hardship.⁴

Yet, in a war in which one-sixth of British men of military age were involved in the army, navy, militia, or Volunteer corps,⁵ it was surely impossible that women would remain completely unaware and unaffected. Fanny Burney insisted that public affairs demanded the interest of private feelings of even mothers, wives and children, such was the magnitude of the crisis;⁶ and historians now recognize that even Jane Austen's works, though traditionally regarded as being oblivious to the major events of her day, and despite the peaceful rural settings and plots of her novels, were probably highly coloured by the turmoil of the Revolution and the wars.⁷

Women were, firstly, actively involved in traditional female wartime occupations and in those concerns peculiar to this war which fitted into the accepted spheres of female influence. Sacrifice was seen as a female speciality (male loss and bereavement is rarely mentioned), and their biggest public contribution to the war effort was held to be their releasing of husbands, brothers and sons to serve in the armed forces with the risk that they might not return. Sewing and knitting were more mundane skills that women could respectably contribute—Colours for Volunteer corps, socks and flannel waistcoats for the regular army. Some society ladies, such as Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, accompanied their husbands to their militia obligations.⁸ Standing naval personnel (pursers, boatswains, gunners, carpenters and

³ Cottrell, 'English Views', p.96.

⁴ Laetitia Matilda Hawkins, *Letters on the Female Mind* (2 vols.: London, 1793), ii, 194.

⁵ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.133.

⁶ Fanny Burney, *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French Clergy: Earnestly Submitted to the Humane Consideration of the Ladies of Great Britain* (London, 1793), pp.1-2.

⁷ See Marilyn Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas* (Oxford, 1975) and Warren Roberts, *Jane Austen and the French Revolution* (London and Basingstoke, 1979).

⁸ Earl of Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana. Extracts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, (London, 1955), pp.204, 207. See also BMC 8347, James Gillray, 'Flannel Armour;—

cooks) were each usually warranted to one particular ship for the greater part of their working lives and, while warships were in port, their wives and families often treated their vessels as their homes.⁹

Philanthropic work was another recognizably female sphere. Hester Lynch Piozzi (previously Mrs. Thrale) was particularly concerned for the ordinary people in her neighbourhood because of the hardships they sustained during the war, and she distributed food, held special dinners on holidays, encouraged basic education for the children, and criticized the government for apparently ignoring the misery of the poor (and its potential consequences).¹⁰ The French *émigrés* who took refuge in Britain were not welcomed by all women—the pro-French writer Helen Maria Williams had no sympathy for them, and Lady Elizabeth Foster was frankly terrified of them¹¹—but others pitied and tried to help them. Fanny Burney married an *émigré*, Alexandre d'Arblay. Her novel, *The Wanderer* (1814) was begun and set in the 1790s, and has much to say about the position of the homeless and alienated refugees. Hannah More insisted that British help for the *émigrés* ought not to be seen as 'rare and splendid actions', but rather 'the ordinary and habitual virtues which occur in the common course of action among Christians'.¹²

Some British women, of differing social and political backgrounds, had reason to be resident in France during the Revolution or even during part of the war, and so gained first-hand experience of international events and their Continental repercussions. The Duchess of Devonshire and her husband, Foxite supporters, left England for a year in June 1789: en route to Spa, they spent some time with the Queen of France (a friend of Georgiana's since 1774) just at the very outbreak of the Revolution, experiencing the incursions of the mob at Versailles and hearing accounts from some of the principal actors of the events happening in the States General. The Duchess returned to the Continent in November 1791 and did not return to England until September 1793, eight months after the outbreak of the war between Britain and

Female Patriotism,—or—Modern Heroes Accounted for the Wars' (18 November 1793); *ibid.*, 8348, [William Dent], 'Beauty's Donation or Feeling and Loyalty' (21 November 1793); *ibid.*, 8349, Isaac Cruikshank, 'Flannel Coats of Mail against the Cold or the British Ladies Patriotic Presents to the Army' (25 November 1793).

⁹ Michael Lewis, *A Social History of the Navy, 1793-1815* (London, 1960), pp. 261, 280, 285; see also N.A.M. Rodger, *The Wooden World* (Glasgow, 1986; Fontana Press, 1990), pp.21-3.

¹⁰ William McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi. Portrait of a Literary Woman* (Chapel Hill and London, 1985); see, for example, Katharine C. Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana. The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809* (2nd edition, 2 vols.: Oxford, 1951), ii, 1002-3.

¹¹ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France: Containing Many New Anecdotes Relative to the French Revolution, and the Present State of French Manners* (2nd edition: London, 1792), p.104; Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana Corr.*, p.224, Lady Elizabeth Foster to the Duchess of Devonshire, 2 March 1797.

¹² Hannah More, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont, with a prefatory address in behalf of the French Emigrant Clergy' (1793) in *Works* (3 vols.: London, 1847), ii, 403.

France. Her friend, Lady Sutherland, was in Paris during the eventful month of August 1792.¹³ The radical Mary Wollstonecraft lived in France from December 1792 until late summer 1795—through two and a half years of continual conflict between the two countries. Helen Maria Williams' elder sister, Cecilia, had married a Frenchman and lived there, and Williams herself, another radical, spent much time in France from 1788 onwards. The conservative Lady Eglantine Wallace had been arrested in Paris in October 1789 under suspicion of being an agent of the English government; she was acquitted, but remained on the Continent for the next three years, making the acquaintance of the French General Dumouriez, whom she greatly admired. Wallace eventually fled from Spa when it was pillaged by the Austrians and Prussians in their retreat in September 1792, and took refuge first in Liège and then in Maastricht, before returning to England in January 1793.¹⁴

Women also became actively involved in the British war effort in this period in greater numbers and in new ways. Many more engaged in pro-war activism than had been the case in any previous conflict, encouraged, as were ordinary British men, by the late eighteenth-century context of burgeoning extra-parliamentary political activity of various sorts—an abundance of available literature, pressure groups, associations, meetings, and so on. Female friendly societies marched in displays of patriotic celebration,¹⁵ and local ladies were much in demand to present Colours to newly-formed militia and Volunteer corps at great open-air ceremonies.¹⁶ Mrs. Jane Webb of Plymouth, anxious to prove the loyalty of the great majority of the whole British population, male as well as female, wrote:

...all ranks of people, with a spirit becoming Britons, are arming for our internal defence....May we not borrow a phrase from the French Convention—but, *I hate them all*—may we not say the whole kingdom is the school of Mars; the ladies are zealous, and in many places have presented those new-raised corps with colours.¹⁷

D.G. Vaisey's research on donations to the 1798 Voluntary Contribution in Staffordshire suggests that women were eager to participate in patriotic subscriptions,

¹³ Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana Corr.*, p.194, Lady Sutherland to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, 31 August 1792.

¹⁴ Lady Eglantine Wallace, *The Conduct of the King of Prussia and General Dumourier Investigated by Lady Wallace* (London, 1793).

¹⁵ Colley, *Britons*, pp.237-8, 277-81.

¹⁶ See R.W. Chapman (ed.), *Jane Austen's Letters to Her Sister Cassandra and Others* (2 vols.: Oxford, 1932), i, 65, Jane Austen to Cassandra Austen, 2 June 1799; Sophia Sarah Banks' collection of broadsides and newspaper cuttings in the British Library, LR.301.h.6, ff.55-70; Valpy, *Sermon Before the Reading and Henley Associations*, pp.33-4.

¹⁷ Jane Webb, *A Letter to His Grace the Duke of Portland, on the Late Alarming Parties in the Country*, by Mrs. Webb (Plymouth, 1795), pp.12-13.

giving small and large amounts according to their means.¹⁸ In the face of much male sneering and teasing, Mrs. Crewe and the Marchioness of Buckingham set up a Society of Ladies designed to raise money to help *émigré* clergy in Britain.¹⁹ Linda Colley argues that these activities were not just a socially acceptable extension of 'the traditional female virtues of charity, nurture and needlework' into the military sphere, but rather 'the thin end of a far more radical wedge', because they demonstrated that these domestic skills possessed 'a public as well as a private relevance'.²⁰ Such organized charity, as distinct from hidden generosity, demonstrated that women wanted these needs to be noticed by British society and that they had the self-confidence to set about meeting them themselves.

They were rarely involved in the physical defence of the country. The presentation of flags and the collection of subscriptions were as close as they were generally permitted to encroach—or as far as they wanted to be involved. Nevertheless, during the Fishguard landings of 1797, when the danger was real and present rather than merely anticipated, local women played a significant part in the defence of the town. They turned out in numbers to help chase off the enemy, and one of them, Jemima Nicholas, was said to have captured fourteen of the invaders, for which she was awarded a pension for life of fifty pounds a year.²¹ Moreover, despite its illegality, some women did sail with warships during operational voyages. Samuel Grant, purser on board the *Dido* in 1795-6, recorded in his journal playing cards on several occasions 'with the Ladys', presumably passengers. Twice in the summer of 1798, he noted that women gave birth on board his ship the *Goliath*, when it was anchored at the mouth of the Nile.²² At least two other women were present at the Battle of the Nile in 1798, for they were still alive to present claims for the General Service Medal in 1847 (which the Admiralty did not refute, but declined to award).²³ During the naval mutiny at the Nore in June 1797, *The Times* reported that 'A Lieutenant of Marines is said to have been killed by a pistol-shot from one of the women in the *Iris* Frigate.'²⁴ On the practice of female stowing away, Michael Lewis wrote: 'How often this happened it is impossible to say, but odd instances of women

¹⁸ Vaisey, 'The Pledge of Patriotism', esp. pp.214, 220-2.

¹⁹ Joyce Hemlow (ed.), *The Journals and Letters of Fanny Burney* (12 vols.: Oxford, 1972-84), iii, 5, Fanny Burney to Dr. Burney, 16 September [1793]; Margaret Anne Doody, *Frances Burney. The Life in the Works* (Cambridge, 1988), p.205.

²⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p.261.

²¹ Cottrell, 'English Views', pp.121-2. Cottrell points out that these facts were entirely ignored by the broadsides describing and celebrating the community's escape—these rather emphasized women's weakness and helplessness.

²² NMM, GRT/3, 28-30 April, 10 May 1795; *ibid.*, GRT/6, 17 July, 16 September 1798.

²³ Lewis, *Social History of the Navy*, p.283.

²⁴ *The Times*, 14 June 1797.

aboard turn up so regularly, and often so unexpectedly, that the thing cannot have been a rarity.’²⁵

Women could also accompany the armed forces legitimately, although they were not universally welcomed. Admiral Sir John Jervis (later Earl St. Vincent) declared in August 1796 that ‘the nurses, and other women, on board the Dolphin Hospital Ship...are become so licentious as to be a nuisance to the Sick, to the Surgeon, and [to Dr. Harness, Physician to the Mediterranean Fleet]’, and he ordered that they be all discharged to the Naval Hospital at Gibraltar.²⁶ In a similar vein, Matthew Lewis, a Home Office clerk, grumbled to Evan Nepean at the War Office about the numbers of women travelling with British army regiments, for whom additional accommodation had to be provided (quoting numbers of around 50 - 150 women, often together with their children, per regiment of 500 - 900 men). At the end of one such letter, Lewis added darkly: ‘While you have *Female* Armies, there will be plenty of Plundering.’²⁷

Women’s activism during the war was not limited to pro-war activities. There were women of all backgrounds who believed that war in general was sinful and that this particular war was unjust and unnecessary. Scottish women took part in anti-militia riots. In the 1797 Tranent militia disturbances, the women complained that ‘it was a hard thing for them to have the trouble of bringing up children...and then to have them taken away from them’ to do military service.²⁸ John Bohstedt notes that, interestingly, no women are reported to have been involved in the riots provoked by the Supplementary Militia Act in England and Wales; however, they did participate in the London ‘crimp’ riots of August 1794, and they were very often involved in food riots all over the country, particularly in those years in which the hardships of war-time exacerbated poor harvests, notably 1795-6 and 1799-1800. They were also prominent in Campbeltown’s resistance to the press-gang in February 1795 and in the crowds in London in September 1800 protesting against high prices, the war and the government’s policies in general.²⁹ Women supported John Thelwall’s series of radical lectures in London, Norwich and Yarmouth, and one lady participated in a

²⁵ Lewis, *Social History of the Navy*, p.282.

²⁶ NMM, DUC/3, Jervis to Captain Retalick, 25 August 1796.

²⁷ PRO HO 50/385 ff.175, 461, Matthew Lewis to Evan Nepean, 19 Feb. and 7 May 1794. C.f. the *Sun*, 28 February 1793: ‘The Duke of York did not suffer any but married women, who could shew their certificates, to embark with the Guards.’ On women accompanying troops abroad, see also the *Sun*, 14, 17 August 1799.

²⁸ R.A. Houston, ‘Women in the economy and society of Scotland, 1500-1800,’ in R.A. Houston and I.D. Whyte, *Scottish Society 1500-1800* (Cambridge, 1989), p.137.

²⁹ Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, pp.174, 3, 33, 69, 74, 85-6, 93-4, 189, 206; Stevenson, ‘The London “Crimp” Riots’, pp.45-6; Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland*, p.121; Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces*, p.65.

subscription to prosecute the press-gang which had disrupted his lectures in Yarmouth.³⁰ The eccentric Lady Wallace tried to influence government policy directly: having met and been enchanted by Dumouriez, she was prevailed upon by the French general to appeal to her government on his behalf to form an alliance with the French Republic. After stipulating to Dumouriez that he must not bombard Maastricht or attack Holland in any other way, she wrote confidently to the British Cabinet, not only from the Continent, but repeatedly after her return to England at the beginning of 1793. 'I was ignorant enough to flatter myself,' she confessed in a pamphlet explaining her actions to the nation at large, 'that I was most materially serving my country, by making these proposals,' and she was bewildered by the lampooning she received from the loyalist press.³¹

Political pamphleteering, however, was possibly the most radical activity in which women were involved during the war, however conservative the contents of some of their publications, for it demonstrated that women were able to do the one thing in which their presumed inability was supposed to set them apart from men—to think intelligently about the war and its issues. In replying to Helen Maria Williams' radical *Letters from France* with her own *Letters on the Female Mind* (1793), Laetitia Hawkins tried to prove that women's minds were naturally unsuited to politics, yet she herself had to plunge deeply into political arguments in order to refute her opponent.³² She feared social anarchy, whether among ranks or between the sexes, but it could only be prevented by political means.³³

Mary Wollstonecraft's literary output did not end with the *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*. Shortly after her arrival in Paris in December 1792, she wrote to her sister Everina: 'my spirits are fatigued with endeavouring to form a just opinion of public affairs'.³⁴ She proceeded to write the *Letter on the Present Character of the French Nation* (1793), which, according to Virginia Sapiro, 'is also the first glimpse we have of the political idealist (an English Jacobin) seriously grappling with the reality of human political behaviour: the Terror.'³⁵ Helen Maria Williams also struggled with this, but she did little more than accept the violence and note her confusion. Wollstonecraft's thinking and questioning were much more substantial. In

³⁰ E.P. Thompson, 'Hunting the Jacobin Fox', pp.96, 99.

³¹ Wallace, *The Conduct of the King of Prussia*, pp.116-7.

³² Hawkins, *Letters on the Female Mind*, i, 5, 7-11, 18, 21-3, 117.

³³ *Ibid.*, i, 85-7, 105-6; ii, 90-1; Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer. Ideology as Style in the Works of Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley and Jane Austen* (Chicago and London, 1984), pp.31-2.

³⁴ Ralph M. Wardle (ed.), *The Collected Letters of Mary Wollstonecraft* (New York and London, 1979), p.225, Mary Wollstonecraft to Everina Wollstonecraft, 24 December 1792.

³⁵ Sapiro, *A Vindication of Political Virtue*, p.32.

1794, she published a substantial *Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect It Has Produced in Europe*, which provides us with her fullest analysis of the French Revolution and the nature of politics. It covers only the period up to 1790; nevertheless, being delivered from the standpoint of 1794, it has a significant amount to say about war and the tendency of the Revolution towards it. Ardently pro-French and profoundly emotionally involved with the Revolution, Wollstonecraft was nevertheless clear-sighted enough to perceive and fear the tyranny of human passions which, in the present situation, had produced the Terror and war. She was sickened by the cruelty she saw, yet she understood the Revolution to be intrinsic to the general progress of the world towards a more enlightened and equitable state, and she tried to explain the presence of violence in such a process.

Loyalist works by women are also significant. Hester Piozzi's *Retrospection* (1801) is deceptively easy to brush aside as the collection of thoughts and ponderings of an elderly lady³⁶—almost an ordered version of *Thraliana*, her private book of jottings and journalistic fragments. It presents, however, a tight and deterministic vision of world history, rather in the style of seventeenth-century Puritan apocalyptic literature, presenting events as moving inexorably towards the Revolution and the war, with which the work closes. It can be argued that Fanny Burney's novels from the revolutionary and war period are not typically simple conservative fables, but rather—particularly *The Wanderer*—a mixture of ideological elements in a serious exploration of current aspects of the revolutionary war debate in Britain, such as political radicalism, national chauvinism, the role of women in society and the stultifying effects of luxury and insularity in a nation.³⁷ Other women—notably Mary Robinson and Amelia Alderson (later Mrs. Opie)—expressed clear views on the war through poetry published in newspapers and periodicals.³⁸

The writings of these women and others should not be cast aside as superficial or insignificant. Like those of men, they might not always have been accurate, but they were making serious contributions to the general discussion about the current turbulence of world affairs. To appreciate these fully we need to explore in greater detail what they had to say about the war with France in particular.

³⁶ The *Critical Review* dismissed it as 'a series of dreams by an old lady'—quoted in McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi*, p.248.

³⁷ Doody, *Frances Burney*, pp.205, 325-8.

³⁸ See Betty T. Bennett (ed.), *British War Poetry in the Age of Romanticism: 1793-1815* (New York and London, 1976), *passim*.

II

The majority of the British population, male and female, welcomed the French Revolution in its initial stages and certainly did not envisage the magnitude of the cataclysm it would become. 'I somehow fancy 'tis but a temporary Judgement on a Court so impious as theirs has been,' Mrs. Piozzi commented airily, '...and France after She has been bent backwards so long, will feel her Elastic Force, & restore herself speedily.'³⁹ Many were subsequently greatly disappointed by the rapid degeneration of the Revolution into violence and ferocious ambition. Unsurprisingly, most women were convinced that war was, in general, an evil which ought to be avoided if at all possible; they were also, however, generally imbued with the same Francophobia as characterized the average British male in this period. Ward Hellstrom and Warren Roberts have detected a markedly Gallophobic bias in Jane Austen's novels, particularly through her characterization of certain individuals (Windham in *Pride and Prejudice*, the Crawfords in *Mansfield Park* and Frank Churchill in *Emma*, for example) with classic 'French' personality traits, such as frivolity, urbanity, polish, moral carelessness, deviousness and wilfulness, as opposed to her heroes' and heroines' plain 'English' virtues.⁴⁰ *The Lady's Magazine* continued to carry reports on the fashions current in Paris whenever it could, despite the war;⁴¹ but women were part of a population which by and large supported its government in the conflict against the French Republic. Hester Piozzi, as so often, colourfully captured the ambivalent attitude of many: 'The Times are sadly out of Joynt indeed, the War ruinous, & Peace a peril that I hope we shall be spared; for as things now stand We have a Right to keep French men from our Island by Alien Bills &c.'⁴²

Some, such as Hannah More, were quite convinced of the justice of the war. In what war, she asked, 'can the sincere Christian ever have stronger inducements, and more reasonable encouragement to pray for the success of his country, than in this?' It was a war fought not for revenge or conquest, but for the defence of Britain's king, constitution, religion, laws and liberty ('in the sound, sober, and rational sense of that term').⁴³ British aims in the hostilities, according to most pro-war literature, were clearly the protection of British blessings; some women followed a more Burkean, crusading line and were, like More, of the opinion that Britain's best, and

³⁹ Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana*, ii, 788.

⁴⁰ Ward Hellstrom, 'Francophobia in *Emma*', *Studies in English Literature*, v (1965), 607-17; Roberts, *Jane Austen*, pp.31-42.

⁴¹ See the issues for May and October 1798 (vol. 29), June, September, November and December 1799 (vol. 30).

⁴² Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana*, ii, 904-5.

⁴³ More, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont', p.407.

perhaps only, security lay in the utter destruction of the Revolution and its doctrines and the restoration of the monarchy in France.⁴⁴

It is also true, however, that many women did think that they, as women, had a particular interest in the successful outcome of the war. They were convinced that the survival of the family institution, and indeed their own personal safety, was at risk. Colley suggests that this fear, though partly inspired by the significant danger of a French invasion in this particular conflict, was partly caused by the trial and execution of Marie-Antoinette and other prominent French women, demonstrating that the revolutionaries were no respecters of gender. 'In Great Britain, woman was subordinate and confined. But at least she was also safe.'⁴⁵ Thus, Mrs. Richard Wyatt, presenting their Colours to the Havering Volunteers, told them: 'As fathers, husbands, brothers, relations and friends, our sex and our children have every natural and well-founded reason to hope, for all the protection in your power, under God, that zeal, affection, and courage, can yield.'⁴⁶

There were also, of course, women who continued to support the French Revolution and who therefore opposed the British war against France. Mary Wollstonecraft and Helen Maria Williams were the most prolific of these female writers. Because of the increasing diffusion of the knowledge and understanding of political principles, Wollstonecraft believed that it was possible to be confident of an approaching era of peace and reason, in which war would be abandoned as irrational and brutish.⁴⁷ The arguments used by female anti-war pamphleteers mirrored those of their male counterparts, although they were more likely to condemn *all* war as futile and immoral, as well as the present war as unjust and unnecessary. Wollstonecraft, in an interesting development of the ancient concept of *otium* (the possession of leisure as the distinction of the nobility) into the late eighteenth-century middle-class disdain for the idleness of the rich, condemned war as an adventure pursued by the idle.⁴⁸ Mrs. Barbauld insisted that the language of 'natural enemies' was absurd, 'as if nature, and not our own broad passions, made us enemies...and yet this language is heard in a Christian country, and these detestable maxims veil themselves under the semblance of virtue and public spirit.' People ought to think less about glorious

⁴⁴ See, for example, Mrs. Piozzi in Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana*, ii, 932 and Miss Patterson's speech to the Poplar and Blackwell Volunteers as reported by the *Times*, 6 June 1799 (Banks Collection, f.64).

⁴⁵ Colley, *Britons*, pp.254, 256.

⁴⁶ Banks Collection, f.57.

⁴⁷ Mary Wollstonecraft, 'An Historical and Moral View of the Origin and Progress of the French Revolution; and the Effect it has Produced in Europe' (1794), in Janet Todd and Marilyn Butler (eds.), *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft* (7 vols.: London, 1989), vi, 17.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p.23.

heroes returning home and more about the maimed, the bereaved, the orphaned, the mental agonies of war and the ravages it inflicted upon countries (of which Britain, geographically isolated from the Continent, was complacently ignorant).⁴⁹

In discussing the nature of the war, women writers were often accused of 'emotionalism' in their writing. It is true that they often vented their personal emotional responses to the Revolution itself. They were particularly fixated by French atrocities and the sufferings of individuals; whereas male writers, by and large, wrote about these only for a purpose, chiefly that of inspiring loyalty to the British government through fear, female writers and readers seemed to be genuinely transfixed by them. Many women were deeply affected by the trial and execution of Louis XVI,⁵⁰ but it was not only the sufferings of royalty which fascinated women. *The Lady's Magazine* carried such items as 'The Dying Soldier; a Fragment' and 'Verses from the French; written by a French Prisoner, as he was Preparing to go to the Guillotine'.⁵¹ Helen Maria Williams herself admitted that her political creed was 'entirely an affair of the heart; for I have not been so absurd as to consult my head upon matters of which it is so incapable of judging', and she wrote of falling 'violently in love' with delegates to the National Assembly for their patriotic gestures.⁵²

It is not necessary, however, to see all subjective female writing about the Revolution as warm-hearted romanticism. Sapiro argues that Wollstonecraft's heated style in the *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1791) was all part of her response to Edmund Burke, who had himself written in a subjective and often violently colourful style. Wollstonecraft was simply replying in kind or, perhaps, even criticizing his method by parody rather than responding to the substance of his argument.⁵³ Furthermore, when women wrote 'sentimentally' about the Revolution or the war, it was generally because, for various reasons, they elevated the private aspects of events over the public. Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was, on one level, a call for radical political thought to be extended beyond public politics of government institutions into the private politics of the home.⁵⁴ They recognized this

⁴⁹ [Barbauld], *Sins of Government, Sins of the Nation*, pp.22-4, 28-30.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Wardle (ed.), *Wollstonecraft Letters*, p.227, Wollstonecraft to Joseph Johnson, 26 December 1792; also poems written by Mary Robinson, Charlotte Smith and Eliza Daye for *The European Magazine*, *The Scots Magazine*, *The Universal Magazine*, and *The Gentleman's Magazine*, printed in Bennett (ed.), *British War Poetry*, pp.74-6, 81-2, 91-4.

⁵¹ *The Lady's Magazine*, 29 (July 1798), 325, 328. See also Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.216.

⁵² Helen Maria Williams, *Letters written in France in the summer of 1790* (London, 1790), pp.66, 59-60.

⁵³ Sapiro, *A Vindication of Political Virtue*, pp.191-202.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.28.

quality in themselves: the heroine of Helen Maria Williams' little tale, *Madeleine and Auguste*, perceived the chief implication of the Revolution's liberation of all Frenchmen to be that every Frenchman must surely be free to marry the woman he loved. The lady of the house in Charlotte Smith's novel, *The Banished Man* (1794), was able to talk of politics, but chose not to be interested in them except insofar as they could advance her own family members.⁵⁵

A preoccupation with individual public figures was a natural by-product of this concern for the personal in female writing and opinions. Lady Wallace was clearly fascinated by Dumouriez—'this wonderful little hero'—while Helen Maria Williams was infatuated with Napoleon, 'the benefactor of his race'.⁵⁶ Other women were more fascinated by what they believed to be the Corsican general's ferocity and brutality, and with what particulars of his early history and present lifestyle they could glean from the press. Mrs. Piozzi was vehement, viewing the name 'Napoleon' as a corrupted form of the word 'Apollyon', which means 'Destroyer': the apocalyptic name for the devil.⁵⁷ The superhero for pro-war writers was Horatio Nelson, particularly after his victory over the French fleet at the Nile in 1798. *The Lady's Magazine* published a biographical sketch of the admiral, together with 'an elegant Engraving' of his ship engaging two larger Spanish ships off Cape St. Vincent in 1797.⁵⁸ He became a focus for the cult of heroism which had grown among women in particular in Britain over the preceding five years, though this was adulation at a distance. Nearer at hand, as Jane Austen noticed, in *Pride and Prejudice*, were those soldiers barracked around the country, parading in their fine uniforms and attracting much female attention—another way, personal and small-scale, in which women could involve themselves in a society at war. Colley notes that the Oldham diarist William Rowbottom was also very aware of this enthusiasm for military men among the local working women. Austen did not describe this situation with approval, however, as Roberts comments—rather, in Lydia's downfall, she showed what could happen as a result of billeting soldiers among the civilian population.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Williams, *Letters from France* (1792), pp.174-5; Charlotte Smith, *The Banished Man* (4 vols.: London, 1794), ii, 110-1. See also Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana Corr.*, p.208, the Duchess of Devonshire to her mother, 2 July [1794].

⁵⁶ Wallace, *The Conduct of the King of Prussia*, p.125; Helen Maria Williams, *A Tour in Switzerland, or a View of the Present State of the Governments and Manners of those Cantons, with comparative sketches of the present state of Paris* (2 vols.: London, 1798), ii, 56-7.

⁵⁷ Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Retrospection: or a view of the most striking and important events, characters, situations, and their consequences, which the last eighteen hundred years have presented to the view of mankind* (2 vols.: London, 1801), ii, 523-4. See *Revelation* 9:11.

⁵⁸ *The Lady's Magazine*, 29 (November 1798), 483-5.

⁵⁹ Colley, *Britons*, pp.256-7; Roberts, *Jane Austen*, p.96. See also BMC 9315, Rowlandson, 'She Will Be a Soldier' (1 May 1798); *ibid.*, 9316, Rowlandson, 'Soldiers Recruiting' (1 August 1798).

This tendency of women writers to focus on the private at the expense of the public is entirely in keeping with the views of late eighteenth-century society on what women of their class ought to be interested in. It was deliberately encouraged, as Mary Poovey points out, by the male editors and journalists of women's literature. She contrasts the reporting of the execution of the French King in *The Gentleman's Magazine* with that in its companion-piece, *The Lady's Magazine*. Whereas the former concentrated on detailed political information, of which the execution of Louis XVI was merely one part, the latter, which rarely reported on political events, made a great deal of the event, concentrating especially on the outward appearance of the king on the day of his death.⁶⁰ Women were not supposed to be concerned with public affairs, and their emphasis on the personal, private side of public events may well have been the valve they used in order to be able to comment on the war at all.⁶¹ Some clearly felt this constraint more than others—radicals such as Wollstonecraft and Williams felt no shame in commenting freely on the war; the conservative Austen and Burney were much more restrained, but this does not mean that they were unaware of the public arena of political events or unable to express opinions about it, as Austen showed in her subtle comment on the government policy creating military barracks.

Female writers often carried a vivid impression of the sense of the significance of the times, whether they believed them to be enlightened or evil. 'The times,' proclaimed Mrs. Piozzi, '...are signally awful, and I verily think that Daemons are roaming about among us, with enlarged permission both to tempt and terrify. God preserve us!' 'The face of things, public and private, vexes me,' Wollstonecraft told Gilbert Imlay in 1794, '...I really believe that Europe will be in a state of convulsion, during half a century at least.'⁶² They frequently rejected as arrogant and unjustified the notion that Britain was a favoured nation. Britain was not so pure, wrote Mrs. Barbauld austere, that it could afford to see itself as an instrument of divine justice. It was true that Britain was a great nation, in terms of power, resources, connections and dependencies, and had it in its power considerably either to add to, or to diminish, the sum total of human happiness, but it had abused that power shamefully. Its trade in African slaves and its conquests in India were crimes at least as heinous as any France had committed, and it had wilfully encouraged the aggression of the European states towards one another. In any case, she insisted, 'as God is no respecter of persons, neither is he of nations.' Fanny Burney agreed. 'We are too apt to consider

⁶⁰ Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, pp.16-19.

⁶¹ Roberts, *Jane Austen*, p.105.

⁶² Oswald G. Knapp (ed.), *The Intimate Letters of Hester Piozzi and Penelope Pennington 1788-1821* (London, 1914), p.188, Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, [April 1800]; Wardle (ed.), *Wollstonecraft Letters*, p.242, Mary Wollstonecraft to Gilbert Imlay, [1 January 1794].

ourselves rather as a distinct race of beings,' she told readers of her *Brief Reflections*, recognizing that English chauvinism was a major obstacle to helping the *émigrés*.⁶³ Miss Berry disliked her enforced wartime restriction to Britain and the insularity of her countrymen: 'All the other cities, and courts, and great men of the world *may* be very good sort of places and of people, for aught we know or care; except they are coming to invade us, we think no more of them than of the inhabitants of another planet.'⁶⁴

Conservative female writers were particularly anxious about the domestic troubles, potential and actual, created by the war. 'John Bull is a fine Fellow,' claimed Mrs. Piozzi, 'but if not well *fed* he will *roar*.'⁶⁵ She disapproved both of measures taken by the rich that were guaranteed to irritate the poor (such as the closure of the London brewhouses in 1795) and measures taken by the poor to redress their grievances against the rich (such as the handbill posted on church doors in Streatham 'demanding, not *requesting* Relief for the lower Orders').⁶⁶ Hannah More's pamphlet, *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont* (1793), made the connection between atheism and radical politics: 'it is much to be suspected, that certain opinions in politics have a tendency to lead to certain opinions in religion.' In its turn, the curse of atheism was that it cut civil and social ties, it acted against happiness, excellence and virtue, and its fruit was intolerance. She saw the war as a divine chastening 'for the iniquities of the human race', and called for individual and national self-examination and repentance. 'Let us learn to fear the fleets and armies of the enemy much less,' she warned, 'than those iniquities at home which this alarming dispensation may be intended to chastise.'⁶⁷ Mrs. Jane West, in her *Tale of the Times* (1799), wrote approvingly of contemporary moral instructors who 'would not ascribe the annihilation of thrones and altars to the arms of France, but to those principles [such as the French sanctioning of divorce] which, by dissolving domestic confidence, and undermining private worth, paved the way for universal confusion.'⁶⁸ Mrs. Piozzi also saw the war in a fundamentally religious light, but hers was a much more apocalyptic vision. The *Retrospection*, in particular, reads in many places like a work of biblical prophecy. Distinguishing first from second causes, she

⁶³ [Barbauld], *Reasons for National Penitence*, pp.16, 4; [Barbauld], *Sins of Government*, p.25; Burney, *Brief Reflections*, p.12.

⁶⁴ Lady Theresa Lewis (ed.), *Extracts of the Journals and Correspondence of Miss Berry from the year 1783 to 1852*, (3 vols., 1865), ii, 70, Miss Berry to Mr. Greathead, 2 August 1798.

⁶⁵ Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana*, ii, 842.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, ii, 920, 909; Knapp (ed.), *Letters to Mrs. Pennington*, p.180, Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, 21 August 1799.

⁶⁷ More, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont', pp.402, 405-6.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Butler, *Jane Austen and the War of Ideas*, p.105.

perceived the first, cosmic cause of the French Revolution to have been the turbulence which is the preparation for Antichrist. In May 1795, she noted in her journal:

a complete Famine, and three raging Factions are now devouring Paris, Poland is become a mere Desart deluged with blood, Insurrections in Rome and Naples threat those unhappy States with calling in the French directly, whilst Russia & the Porte prepare for instant war.—And is not the End of all to be expected? What other Signs would this adulterous Generation have?⁶⁹

Since the war was, at least partly, to be viewed in a religious light; since Britain had no great cause for complacency concerning its own standing with heaven; and, above all, since it was highly desirable from the point of view of domestic social order, female writers urged moral vigilance on the nation. The reform of political grievances, Hannah More insisted, would be insufficient to render the British 'a happy people'; for that, a reformation of manners would be necessary. Helen Maria Williams was horrified by tales of atrocities perpetrated by British officers upon Italian patriot prisoners of war, which she felt to be a great stain on British honour.⁷⁰ So depressed was Mrs. Piozzi about the moral state of the nation that, in 1800, she told her friend Mrs. Pennington that the government 'must leave off appointing such solemnities' as national fasts, since 'the time is over when they did any good.'⁷¹ Mrs. Barbauld, whose pamphlets of 1793 and 1794 were written especially for national Fast Days, was also scathing in her denunciation of their use. 'We cannot subsidize the Deity, as we have subsidized his majesty of Sardinia,' she warned. Instead, a national fast ought to generate serious and sober reflections among the British people, and a firm resolve to turn from all their evil conduct.⁷²

Nevertheless, British women could be as 'jingoistic' as men and, despite their condemnation of national chauvinism and their sternness concerning Britain's moral shortcomings, most of them were confident of their country's superiority in most respects. Conservative moralists had to be careful: they berated their nation, yet they wanted to encourage contentment with its constitution and submission to the government.⁷³ Even the pro-French Helen Maria Williams was scornful of Gallic

⁶⁹ Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana*, ii, 929.

⁷⁰ More, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont', p.391; Helen Maria Williams, *Sketches of the State of Manners and Opinions in the French Republic, towards the close of the eighteenth century. In a Series of Letters* (2 vols.: London, 1801), i, 198.

⁷¹ Knapp (ed.), *Letters to Mrs. Pennington*, p.188, Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, [April 1800].

⁷² [Barbauld], *Sins of Government*, pp.7-9, 30-3.

⁷³ See, for example, More, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont', p.390; R. Brimley Johnson (ed.), *Letters of Hannah More* (London, 1925), p.132, Hannah More to Mrs. Boscawen, 1797; Knapp (ed.), *Letters to Mrs. Pennington*, p.203, Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, 6/7 September 1800.

naval pretensions, however enthusiastic: 'they cannot be formidable against so vast a superiority as ours, and naval skill so pre-eminent.'⁷⁴

Women writers did not often comment on the actual conduct of the war. Mrs. Piozzi, Miss Berry and Helen Maria Williams were the most interested in its events and in the conduct of British strategy, but they did not often offer sustained examination of these aspects of the conflict. Miss Berry, who was as well informed, however, as any private individual, male or female, was frequently scathing of the government's strategy in the United Provinces. 'How Holland is now to be saved I do not see,' she wrote to Horace Walpole on 28 September 1794; 'and how we are to be safe when it is gone, I as little see; and how and why the D. of York stays to have half his army destroyed, and the other half driven home, I still less see.' 'I have long been perfectly convinced,' she later wrote, 'by several circumstances that have come to my knowledge, of the entire and disgraceful ignorance of our Ministers as to foreign politics.'⁷⁵

Fears of invasion, however, were often expressed. Mrs. Piozzi wrote a short *Address to the Females of Great Britain* to urge women to make themselves useful in the face of an invasion by acting rationally and supporting the men, rather than panicking and becoming an extra burden. She translated General Dumouriez's pamphlet, *Tableau Spéculatif de l'Europe* (1798), to raise the invasion alarm among the apparently complacent upper ranks of British society: by then, she thought that 'Invasion was a fear no longer fashionable', and when the Irish rebellion erupted later that year, she saw it as a severe mortification of British vanity.⁷⁶ Fanny Burney was not one of those who were sanguine about the prospect of an invasion. Her beloved sister, Susannah, had moved to Ireland with her husband in 1796, and since the threat to Ireland was always greater in the 1790s than that to England, Burney was continually anxious for her sister's safety. She was not confident that the militia would be able to fend off an invasion once the French had landed:

I hope our shipping will keep off any deeds of contest, as I own I am not very valiant for Men unused to arms as opposed to those who have triumphed in them, & who exist but by plunder. God keep them off, I cry, for Militia men would find it difficult.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Helen Maria Williams, *Letters from France: Containing a Great Variety of Interesting and Original Information* (2 vols.: London, 1793), ii, 126.

⁷⁵ Lewis (ed.), *Berry Correspondence*, i, 441, Miss Berry to the Earl of Orford, 28 September, 1794; *ibid.*, ii, 102, Miss Berry to Mrs. Cholmeley, 28 October 1799.

⁷⁶ McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi*, p.229; Piozzi, *Retrospection*, ii, 527.

⁷⁷ Hemlow (ed.), *Burney Journals and Letters*, iii, 273, Fanny Burney to Mrs. Phillips, 10 February [1797].

Linda Colley has suggested that 'in the wars against Revolutionary and Napoleonic France, as in so many later conflicts, British women seem...to have been no more markedly pacifist than men,' despite the assumptions of history.⁷⁸ This may have been true, but the issue of peace was a characteristically female emphasis. Men might stand to gain from war—professional soldiers and sailors, armaments manufacturers, cloth and leather manufacturers, shipbuilders and contractors. These interests might benefit women indirectly, too, but women were perhaps more likely to be influenced by thoughts of the darker side of war and its adverse consequences for individuals and families involved. Mrs. Piozzi would have endorsed this. 'Female politicians,' she wrote, 'confide in negotiation. Elizabeth of England, Isabella of Spain, hated war, and took every possible method to avoid it; while Queen Anne's natural ardour to conclude the peace of Utrecht cost her almost her life.'⁷⁹ Hannah More, for all her conviction of the justice of the conflict on Britain's part, was weary of it:

I say nothing of war, because I am weary of the word, nor of peace, because I lose all hope of it. I am thankful, however, that the fault does not rest with us; one can bear the affliction far better, when one has not to bear the guilt also.⁸⁰

Songs and poems lamenting the miseries of war and sighing for peace were common, such as the sonnets to peace and war published in *The Lady's Magazine* of 1799.⁸¹ These were not always simple diatribes against the horrors of conflict. Amelia Alderson's *Ode, Written on the Opening of the Last Campaign* (1795), might be described as a pragmatic cry for peace. Preferring an immediate cessation of hostilities, but recognizing that this call was unlikely to be heard on its own merits, the poem prays not only for immediate peace but also for victory against France in the coming campaign, in the hope that this may hasten peace.⁸²

Mrs. Piozzi did have doubts about the eventual peace settlement at Amiens. Admitting that, like everyone else in Britain, she was glad of the peace for material reasons, she nevertheless deplored what to her was a peace bought for the indulgence of British avarice and which allowed the French to reorganize the map of Europe and persuaded Britain to abandon its allies to their fates. Georgiana, Duchess of

⁷⁸ Colley, *Britons*, p.262.

⁷⁹ McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi*, p.221.

⁸⁰ Johnson (ed.), *Letters of Hannah More*, p.132, Hannah More to Mrs. Boscawen, 1797.

⁸¹ vol. 30, pp. 40, 88. See also Banks Collection, p.12—'A Favourite SONG. Sung by Miss WALPOLE in the CAMP.'

⁸² See Bennett (ed.), *British War Poetry*, pp.137-8.

Devonshire, was much more sanguine and perhaps more typical: 'Peace! Peace! Peace!...I must rejoice in spite of all the alarmist long faces.'⁸³

III

What did female writers think about women's involvement in the war? Again, the available evidence comes from a very limited group of writers; but the subject was one they discussed, because it was of particular relevance to them. By referring to the war at all in their writings, they were taking part in the debate on it, and even this was questioned for its validity by many in late eighteenth-century Britain.

There was much acquiescence among these female writers with the notion of separate spheres for men and women, particularly since they were dealing with such an overwhelmingly male-dominated phenomenon as warfare. In this value system, a woman's sphere was almost wholly confined to the private, the domestic and the small-scale—the public arena, the acknowledged sphere of the significant and the substantial, was for men. 'Till Amazonian virtue is again the fashion, we shew better in peace than in war, at home, in our closet or our nursery, than in the field of battle,' admonished Laetitia Hawkins.⁸⁴

The acceptance by women of these separate spheres of influence, however, did not preclude activism in the war effort. Mrs. Piozzi's *Address to the Females of Great Britain* appealed to women to cease behaving like children and statuettes:

Nobody hinders [women] from being wise or strong, Learned or brave; nor does any one...pretend to like them better for being weak, ignorant or pusillanimous. You are therefore...called upon, to act rationally, & steadily: & to maintain that Place among reasonable Beings we have so often heard you urge a Claim to.⁸⁵

Women instructed each other to contribute good domestic management and, thus, money to the British war effort. Hannah More's *Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont* was prefaced by an 'Address in Behalf of the French Emigrant Clergy' which was particularly directed at a female audience, urging them to make small retrenchments in their domestic economy and especially in their own fashion expenses in order to be able to give more to this cause.⁸⁶ Fanny Burney admitted that charitable giving was not an exclusively female virtue, but she argued that women's demands on

⁸³ Balderston (ed.), *Thraliana*, ii, 1030-1; Bessborough (ed.), *Georgiana Corr.*, p.248, the Duchess of Devonshire to her mother, [31 March 1802].

⁸⁴ Hawkins, *Letters on the Female Mind*, i, 118.

⁸⁵ Quoted in McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi*, p.234.

⁸⁶ More, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont', pp.377-80.

their own money were less serious and pressing than those of men, and that their response to her appeal might therefore be swifter and more general.⁸⁷ The role that women claimed for themselves in public life and in the war, if at all, was largely a moral one, and this view would be preserved well into the nineteenth century. As Colley points out, 'Invoking woman's superior morality and virtue proved enormously helpful because it converted the *desire* to act into an overwhelming *duty* to do so'; moreover, 'being thought of as moral exemplars is a lot better than being dismissed as merely inferior and irrelevant.'⁸⁸ In her *Strictures on Female Education* (1799), More argued that German and French infidel literature, which had played such a substantial part in the making of the Revolution in France, was now being specifically directed at Englishwomen, through novels, romances and plays designed to carry their message subtly into female hearts and minds. She urged moral vigilance upon her readers, particularly because she believed that the influence of women of rank on society was considerable. This meant that women had a major contribution to make to the well-being of the state and, while Britain was at war, towards the saving of their country.⁸⁹

Fanny Burney protested against a female involvement in public political debate. She told Princess Mary that she had deliberately left political ideas out of her novel, *Camilla* (1796), because 'they were not a *feminine* subject for discussion' as well as because she believed that steering her readers clear of politics altogether was doing them a better service even than inculcating them with her own ideas on the subject. She also thought it necessary to preface her *Reflections on the Emigrant French Clergy* (1793) with an 'Apology' to justify the entry of a woman into public affairs on the grounds of 'tenderness and humanity'. Yet enter that arena she did: as Katharine M. Rogers has argued, Burney was what most women who entered public affairs in late eighteenth-century Britain had to be—a mixture of the professedly conformist and the protesting individual. Indeed, that very preface went on to argue that while it was generally right for women to remain in the background, on this occasion it was more proper for them to come forward to offer their help to the *émigrés*.⁹⁰

Mrs. Piozzi claimed that she was 'no Politician...nor either think much or care about publick Concerns.' She had learned, as William McCarthy comments, to

⁸⁷ Burney, *Brief Reflections*, p.7.

⁸⁸ Colley, *Britons*, pp.277, 280.

⁸⁹ More, 'Strictures on the Modern System of Female Education' (London, 1799) in *Works* (2nd edition, 3 vols.: London, 1847), iii, 33-7, 11-13.

⁹⁰ Katharine M. Rogers, *Frances Burney. The World of Female Difficulties* (New York and London, 1990), p.4; Burney, *Brief Reflections*, pp.iv-v.

dissemble her 'unfeminine' interest in politics.⁹¹ In fact, she worried that she had learned to camouflage it too well: of her *British Synonymy* (1794), which used political affairs to illustrate many of its definitions, she wrote, 'I am only afraid the title may prove a millstone round its neck: no one will think of looking for Politics in a volume entitled *British Synonymy*.'⁹² It was a typically female way of expressing political opinion—subtly rather than overtly—but the fact remained that to express political opinion publicly was not at all a typically female thing to do.

Hannah More, like Fanny Burney, felt compelled to defend her entry into political polemics: at the beginning of her preface to her *Remarks on M. Dupont's Speech*, she justified her boldness by the emergency facing the country. Yet throughout the pamphlet, she claimed not to be 'entering far into any political principles'.⁹³ It is true that her conservative case was specifically based on religious principles, but it was just as clearly extended to be applied to political submission and loyalty. She also actively encouraged the distribution of conservative propaganda, and she wrote a great many of the famous *Cheap Repository Tracts* herself.

Miss Edwards, who presented the Colours to the St. Clement Danes Volunteers, and who was herself the daughter of the captain of the First Company of the Corps, made an eloquent defence of the active participation of women in the war effort. As reported by the *True Briton*, she told the assembled company:

...I am not unconscious that such public exhibitions [as this] are far less within our province than the exercise of retired and domestic virtues...however...When the safety of our Country has been menaced—when half the Civilized World look up to Great Britain as their best bulwark against despotism and oppression, it may be allowed even female diffidence to become animated beyond its usual sphere of action, and to feel—ardently feel, that no sex or station should be indifferent in the Cause of Freedom and Religion.⁹⁴

Helen Maria Williams wrote self-deprecatingly of her former ignorance of and lack of interest in public affairs, but explained that she had been stimulated to write by her 'love of the French revolution'.⁹⁵

All these women were in some way claiming that the extraordinary nature of the present times justified their self-directed extension of the female sphere of

⁹¹ Quoted in McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi*, p.210.

⁹² Knapp (ed.), *Letters to Mrs. Pennington*, p.101, Mrs. Piozzi to Mrs. Pennington, 2 December 1793.

⁹³ More, 'Remarks on the Speech of M. Dupont', p.407.

⁹⁴ *True Briton*, 10 June 1799, in the Banks Collection, f.64. See also Miss Patterson's speech to the Poplar and Blackwell Volunteers, as reported by the *Times*, 6 June 1799, in *ibid.*, f.64.

⁹⁵ Williams, *Letters from France* (1790), p.108.

influence. It was true that it was the extremity of threatened revolution in Britain and actual warfare with France which drew them into public activity and permitted their acceptance in this role by society, and that the implication (doubtless often, if not always, sincerely meant) was that after the return of peace and domestic order, they would shrink back into their traditional place in the national wallpaper. Indeed, this is what many women did after 1815; yet a precedent had been created, a wedge forced in, an erosion encouraged. Women would continue to write public tracts on social and political subjects; they would be prominent, for instance, in the Chartist movement of the 1830s and 1840s.

Neither conservative nor radical female writers advocated the idea of female soldiers. While More wanted to 'prevail on beauty, and rank, and talents, and virtue, confederating their several powers, to exert themselves with a patriotism at once firm and feminine, for the general good,' this was intended only in the sense of moral influence, for she immediately went on to insist that she was not 'sounding an alarm for female warriors, or exciting female politicians,' for she hardly knew which of the two was 'the most disgusting and unnatural character.' Wollstonecraft might well have wanted to see female politicians—she certainly wanted women to study politics and to have a greater involvement in it—but she insisted that while she wished to see 'the bayonet converted into a pruning-hook', she would not advise women to 'turn their distaff into a musket'.⁹⁶

IV

What did British men think about women's involvement in the wars against revolutionary France? Those who thought about the question at all reacted, as might be expected, in various different ways. Some simply used gender to characterize men's attitudes to the war and to incite them to particular responses; some saw a passive role for women in the war effort; others were willing to allow them, or even demand from them, a more active participation; and various tactics were employed to steer women towards perceiving their war role in particular ways.

The concept of woman as weak and helpless, physically, mentally and emotionally, was used to denigrate different responses to the war. Both pro-war and anti-war writers and artists dubbed their opponents' position as effeminate and, by implication, unworthy. Dennis O'Bryen charged the government with a 'feminine' cowardice, in resorting to slander against France rather than relying in a 'manly' way

⁹⁶ More, 'Strictures on Female Education', p.14; Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792; London, 1985), pp.162, 160.

solely on the military force of the nation, pitted against that of France. It boded ill, he pointed out, for the success of peace negotiations that the British government and its hirelings should continue to insult and vilify the power it could not conquer.⁹⁷ Vicesimus Knox, the Foxite Rector of Runwell and Ramsden Crays in Essex, and Master of Tunbridge School, went even further, smearing the very trappings of warfare with effeminacy. 'Poor outside pageantry!' he lamented. 'What avails the childish or womanish finery of gaudy feathers on the heads of warriors?'⁹⁸

It was more usual, however, for war to be represented as virile and peace as effeminate. *Reasons against National Despondency* was a pamphlet written in reply to Thomas Erskine's anti-war tract, *A View of the Causes and Consequences of the Present War against France* (1797). Its author scornfully dismissed peace-campaigning as 'this effeminate and womanish longing for what will rivet their chains [to revolutionary France] in the soundness of their slumbers.'⁹⁹ Recruitment literature appealed to masculinity, offering ways in which to assert it, such as the physical training and discipline necessary for the work of a soldier or sailor, and providing a reason to undertake the dangers and hardships of battle—the protection of women and children, man's natural role. By implication, not to serve one's country in this way was to leave one's masculinity open to doubt. This taunt was reinforced by a comparison of British men firstly with the French, and secondly with British women.¹⁰⁰

One of the propaganda devices directed against Frenchmen was to smear them as effeminate. This was not a new insult—it had been employed for decades before the Revolutionary wars, and the French fop was a standard element in eighteenth-century caricatures and literature.¹⁰¹ It was used extensively during the wars, however, particularly in caricature representations of the French army and its generals, and it was suggested that the French had used not only weak and soft men in their regiments, but also women.¹⁰² *The Times* noted on 1 February 1793 that:

In General CUSTINE'S army are said to be more than 1000 women in the dress of men. This explains an article in the Frankfort Gazette

⁹⁷ O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* pp.29-31.

⁹⁸ Knox, *The Prospect of Perpetual and Universal Peace*, p.353.

⁹⁹ *Reasons against National Despondency*, pp.104, 167.

¹⁰⁰ Cottrell, 'English Views', pp.111-2, 118.

¹⁰¹ Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.34-7.

¹⁰² Leonora Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London, 1987), p.19; Cottrell, 'English Views', p.117; BMC 8435 and 8436, Gillray, 'A Republican Beau' and 'A Republican Belle' (10 March 1794); the *Sun*, 24 September 1793.

which states, that one of the French officers taken at Hockheim, was soon after delivered of a fine boy.¹⁰³

The implication was not only that the French army was contemptible but, further, that if an army of British men could be defeated by them, it would destroy all their own and their country's pretensions to masculinity. Some propaganda, moreover, suggested that the French were so unmanly that even the women of Britain could fight them successfully—and if British men could be outshone by the women, their own virility was to be doubted.¹⁰⁴ Caricaturists were especially contemptuous of the British militia and Volunteers, and one print of 1798 or 1799 shows eight of these soldiers each in conversation with a woman on some point of equipment or tactics. In each pair, the woman is depicted as humouring, showing contempt for, or even correcting the man's ignorance and ineptitude in military matters.¹⁰⁵

Most writing by men that considered the position of women in wartime assumed and reinforced an environment of separate spheres for men and women, but often these were spheres in which there was a contribution of some sort which women could make towards the successful outcome of the conflict. Some propaganda viewed this contribution as fundamentally passive. Women, along with children, provided a valuable justification for the war and a compelling reason for men to fight for their country, because of their helplessness and need for protection. 'Who can call himself a *Man*,' asked 'Job Nott' rhetorically, 'who can pretend love for women, who will not prepare or assist in some way to thrust such villains from his Country's shores.' Arthur Young made the same point, although his priorities were less flattering to women: 'The question [of the Revolution and the war] concerns not empires, kings, and ministers alone—it comes home to our fortunes, our houses, our families.'¹⁰⁶

Women could also, passively, be seen as a reward for men who had fought valiantly. Their approval and their safeguarded and faithful chastity were held up as prizes for military courage and service. In a more abstract sense, they were sometimes seen as goddesses or figureheads, either for the nation, or for particular groups of soldiers, sailors, or Volunteers. This perhaps made it peculiarly appropriate that they produced and presented the banners and flags which were to be carried at the head of

¹⁰³ See also the *Sun*, 11 February 1794: 'A French Serjeant was delivered of male twins in the prisons of *Cologne*, on the 27th ult.'

¹⁰⁴ Cottrell, 'English Views', pp.118-20.

¹⁰⁵ BMC 9314, [Woodward] and Isaac Cruikshanks, ['Female Opinions on Military Tactics'], ([1798/9]). C.f. Lady Elliot's amusement at a friend of hers and her husband's enlistment in the Volunteers (Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 291-2, Lady Elliot to Sir Gilbert Elliot, 12 June 1794.

¹⁰⁶ [Theodore Price], *A Continuation of My Last Book, or a Back Front View of the Five Headed Monster*. By Job Nott, Buckle-Maker (Birmingham, 1798), p.6; Young, *The Example of France*, p.144.

regiments and corps of soldiers, which could come to symbolize their benefactors, perhaps rather in the manner that ladies' tokens had been worn centuries previously at jousts. Col. Parker replied to the presentation of his corps' banner with the words, 'when they shall look upon this banner, presented by a female hand, it will bring to their recollections, other tender and interesting affections, and add enthusiasm to their loyalty.'¹⁰⁷ Female figureheads could be either homely or exalted: 'Mrs. Bull' (an innovation of the American revolutionary era), or 'Liberty' or 'Britannia'. 'Britannia' is interesting, in that she symbolized both the country and womanhood. As Cottrell puts it, 'In her, defence of the country and defence of women become one composite issue and chivalric protectionist attitudes can be harnessed in the interests of patriotism.' She further points out that Britannia, by never taking part in battle, even in defence (although she was usually shown to be armed), encapsulated the position of women within the war propaganda. She watched the conflict from the safety of her island or from the heavens, and her weapons appear to be decorative and symbolic rather than for practical use. She symbolized all women, since in prints she was depicted as a beautiful young woman, while songs and broadsheets stressed her older, maternal aspect.¹⁰⁸

Other war propagandists were prepared to permit women a more active role in the British war effort than merely to provide figureheads, to be possessions to be fought for or to be rewards for male soldiers and sailors. One of the most frequently expounded contributions of this sort was the moral significance of women. In part, this was to be seen as a contribution to military morale, in women's faithfulness to their absent husbands. It was also claimed to be a much more fundamental force in society, however. Months before the outbreak of war between Britain and France, in June 1792, a print had been published showing French fish-wives scourging nuns in a convent church. Beneath the title was etched the message:

N:B: This Print is dedicated to the Fair-Sex of Great-Britain, & inten[d]ed to point out the very dangerous effectes which may arise to *Themselves*, if they do not exert that influence to hinder the 'Majority of the People' from getting possession of Executive Power.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Col. Parker of Maidstone, as reported in the *Sporting Magazine*, 73 (October 1798), 33-4, Banks Collection, f.57.

¹⁰⁸ Cottrell, 'English Views', pp.113-6.

¹⁰⁹ BMC 8109, [Gillray], 'A Representation of the horrid Barbarities practised upon the Nuns by the Fish-Women, on breaking into the Nunneries in France' (21 June 1792).

It was therefore incumbent on women to be all they could, both morally and intellectually. For John Bowles, the government war propagandist, as for many others, the most important attribute of a woman was her chastity, and not only that, but its very appearance also, must be jealously guarded.

Female chastity has ever been, and ever *must* be, the main source of all the virtues, which constitute the strength and the security of human society. And female modesty is ordained, by the unalterable constitution of our nature, to be the Guardian of female chastity.¹¹⁰

Thus it was that Bowles saw in the current fashion for women to wear lower necklines than he thought modest, 'a much more formidable enemy than Buonaparte himself, with all his power, perfidy, and malice', for female modesty was 'the last barrier of civilized society'.¹¹¹

Colley has pointed out that most wars of any length emphasized the divisions between the sexes, as the men left home to fight, leaving the women to stay at home, and that the chastity of women was taken particularly seriously by propagandists in this war against revolutionary France because it was a way of scoring points against the enemy, whose women, it was suggested, were somewhat less than chaste.¹¹² A further reason for the chastity of women being held in such great regard by British men in the late eighteenth century, however, has been suggested by Mary Poovey. 'Because of the complex economic and psychological roles of property, a woman could, by one act of infidelity, imperil both a man's present security and his dynastic ambitions.'¹¹³ This explains why, in the prints and literature which depicted women as potential victims of Frenchmen, their treatment was highly ambivalent. Some propaganda showed them simply as objects of purity and beauty to be protected and sheltered from the contamination and plundering of the French. Some, however, showed them as unreliable and unscrupulous, revoltingly eager for the attentions of Frenchmen and greedy for the potential material gain involved in these transactions.¹¹⁴ In the second case, the fear was not so much for the violation of the women as for the contamination of the British line, and therefore British property and liberty, by a French attack. That this was so is supported by the fact that those whom

¹¹⁰ John Bowles, *Remarks on Modern Female Manners, as Distinguished by Indifference to Character, and Indecency of Dress; extracted from 'Reflections Political and Moral at the Conclusion of the War'* (London, 1802), p.5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.12.

¹¹² Colley, *Britons*, pp.250-3. See, for instance, *Desultory Thoughts*, pp.64-6; 'A Word to the Wise', *The Anti-Gallican Songster*, i (London, 1793), 6; Mallet du Pan, *Dangers Which Threaten Europe*, p.53.

¹¹³ Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, pp.5-6.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, BMC 9725, Cruikshank, 'Thoughts on the Invasion!' (27 August 1801).

men were urged to protect were almost exclusively female, rather than the sick or the aged.¹¹⁵ The role of women as childbearers was naturally exalted in time of war, when the size and health of the population was a particularly significant issue. It was also an important part to play in the sense that they were the crucial link in the progress of the male British line.

Another important active role admitted to women by even the sternest conservatives was that of encouraging their men to fight for their country. Theodore Price, *alias* 'Job Nott', insisted that every British arm be lifted against such wild beasts as the French were proving themselves to be; 'and if *every* Arm be lifted; then an old man's arm and a Woman's Arm must be lifted up.' Among other things, women could be 'stirring up young men to be public spirited protectors of their fair country-women,' and, he added, 'you can laugh at those who hang back.'¹¹⁶ Arthur Young argued that if the influence of British women were thus extended, he was sure that it would send 'thousands with ardour to the standard'.¹¹⁷ Some seemed positively to relish the bloodthirstiness of the role they were thus assigning women, as Robert Farren Cheetham's lines suggest:

...like Spartan dames of yore,
Who bravely met their coward-men,
And sham'd them to the embattled field again,
To bear away the palm, or welter in their gore...¹¹⁸

Other suitably feminine contributions were good domestic management and the donation of money, and tending the sick and wounded. The *Sun* wrote approvingly on 27 November 1799 of a ladies' subscription for the relief of those bereaved by the expedition to Holland, and even noted severely that young men ought to follow this shining example. Women were urged to 'buy British' and not to be influenced by fashion into buying goods from abroad. Since men were fighting to preserve comforts and pleasures for them, women ought to donate their money and jewellery and to live frugally for the cause. Ladies were asked to refuse to patronize shops which had men employed in work that women could do, in the hope that this would both send men

¹¹⁵ Cottrell, 'English Views', p.138.

¹¹⁶ [Price], *A Back Front View*, p.6.

¹¹⁷ Young, *National Danger*, p.30; also published in idem., (ed.), *The Annals of Agriculture*, xxviii (1797), 184.

¹¹⁸ Robert Farren Cheetham, 'Ode for Her Majesty's Birthday', in idem., *Odes and Miscellanies* (London, 1796), p.108.

into the army or navy and provide work for impoverished women.¹¹⁹ Thomas Gisborne allowed that

...fortitude is not to be found merely on the rampart, on the deck, on the field of battle. Its place is no less in the chamber of sickness and pain, in the retirements of anxiety, of grief, and of disappointment. In bearing vicissitudes of fortune, in exchanging wealth for penury, splendour for disgrace, women seem, as far as experience has decided the question, to have shewn themselves little inferior to men.¹²⁰

Female pamphleteering was a more questionable activity. Some male writers approved heartily of well-known conservative female writers such as Hannah More: 'MISS HANNAH MORE APPEARS to be another Instrument in the hand of Providence to benefit Mankind, and I hope she will go on in her labour for the public good, and not be diverted from her object by the sneers,' wrote 'Job Nott'.¹²¹ Fanny Burney's *Brief Reflections Relative to the Emigrant French* was favourably reviewed in the *British Critic*, the *Monthly Review*, the *Critical Review* and the *European Magazine*.¹²² Men were often doubtful of the value or propriety of women publicly airing their views on political subjects, however. Richard Polwhele thought that it had been just tolerable in the past, when they had been few and far between—then, a female writer had been 'esteemed a Phenomenon in Literature' and sure of a favourable reception among the critics simply because she was a woman. Now there were so many of them that they had grown complacent and bold, and no longer could they charm critics by self-deprecating acknowledgements of their own 'comparative imbecility'.¹²³ The *Sun* noted on 24 September 1795: 'The Comedy which Mrs. Inchbald has ready, we hope to find devoid of all political allusions; and if so, her Muse, we doubt not, will receive and deserve a liberal patronage.'

With regard to the defence of the country, men were even more loath to yield their traditional prerogative to women. 'Chamberpot defence' was the most that was generally allowed to women by the cartoonists—beyond that, it was men's work.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ Cottrell, 'English Views', p.103; [Theodore Price], *Further Humble Advice from Job Nott* (Birmingham, 1800), pp.5-6; *P.H.*, xxxiii, 1455, Windham, 24 April 1798; *The Times*, 11 March 1795, quoted in Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.51-2.

¹²⁰ Thomas Gisborne, *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* (1796; 8th edition, corrected: London, 1810), p.27.

¹²¹ [Price], *Further Humble Advice from Job Nott*, p.7.

¹²² Hemlow (ed.), *Burney Journals and Letters*, iii, 40 n.2.

¹²³ Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females; A Poem, Addressed to the Author of the Pursuits of Literature* (New York, 1800; first published 1798), pp.19-20 n.

¹²⁴ Cottrell, 'English Views', p.107. An exception was BMC 8432, [Nixon], 'French Invasion or Brighton in a Bustle' (1 March 1794), which showed old women among others helping to repel the French; but they were included rather to mock the quality of national defence rather than to encourage female involvement in it.

'A hen is a respectable animal when she is feeding or brooding her chickens,' 'Thomas Bull' told his cousin 'John', 'but in a cockpit she is ridiculous.'¹²⁵ A letter to *The Gentleman's Magazine* of February 1795¹²⁶ complained that women in Edinburgh were sporting military dress and, worse still, having been caught up in the Volunteering fervour, were learning military drill. 'Unsuccessful as the present war has hitherto been,' he spluttered, 'it has been shown that the courage and bravery of Britons is not yet evaporated...' —in other words, that men were not yet quite reduced to allowing women to fight with or for them. Apart from this wound to machismo, female soldiery was, according to a reply in the March issue, 'absurd, indecent, and, I will add, wanton, behaviour'.¹²⁷ This was made plain to readers of *The Lady's Magazine* in 1799:

Women were created to be the companions of man, to please him, to solace him in his miseries, to console him in his sorrows, and not to partake with him the fatigues of war, of the sciences, and of government. Warlike women, learned women, and women who are politicians, equally abandon the circle which nature and institutions have traced round their sex; they convert themselves into men.¹²⁸

Even the *Morning Chronicle* expressed disapproval of the Scottish women's involvement in the Tranent militia riot.¹²⁹ Poets occasionally referred to women in arms, though rather ambiguously: Robert Southey's epic poem *Joan of Arc* (1795), taking a military woman for its main subject, was clearly hostile to England, and W.F. Sullivan, a little tongue-in-cheek, insisted that

...shou'd occasion warrant such a proffer,
E'en BRITISH AMAZONS themselves would offer;
Wou'd drop their Needles, Scissars, and their Stitches;
And like *some* Ladies—All wou'd wear the Breeches...¹³⁰

It was not until 1803 that 'The Projector' wrote in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of his genuine concern that women were being wasted as a potential military resource and that, were they suitably trained and educated for the task, women might be equal if not superior to men as soldiers. This, of course, was a highly controversial claim.¹³¹

¹²⁵ A Letter to John Bull, Esq. From His Second Cousin Thomas Bull, Author of the First and Second Letters to his Brother John (London, 1793), p.35.

¹²⁶ 65 (1795), 102-5—quoted in Colley, *Britons*, pp.253-4.

¹²⁷ *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 65 (1795), 211. See also *ibid.*, 293.

¹²⁸ *The Lady's Magazine*, 30 (October 1799), 450-1.

¹²⁹ *The Morning Chronicle*, 29 August 1797.

¹³⁰ W.F. Sullivan, *The Test of Union & Loyalty: A New Piece, On the Present War with France* (Margate, 1795), p.10.

¹³¹ 'The Projector, XXI', in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, ii (1803), 715, quoted in Cottrell, 'English Views', pp.109-11.

Men wrote much of the literature directed at women. *The Lady's Magazine* and other periodicals for women were edited by men and mostly written by men. Furthermore, as Cottrell points out, while several pamphlets were signed by 'an Englishwoman' or 'Britannia', the text suggests that they were written by men.¹³² *A Sketch of Modern France. In a Series of Letters to a Lady of Fashion...By a Lady* (1798) is a good example. It was edited by a Christopher Lake Moody and it professed a respectably conventional female attitude to international affairs, relying for the most part on giving the political opinions of various male figures rather than expressing the lady's own thoughts. It could as easily have been written by a man, for didactic purposes, as by a woman. Most pamphlets were specifically addressed to a male readership. Literature addressed to women laid much less emphasis on reporting facts and was of a much more emotional or moralizing strain. 'The implicit assumption,' as Poovey notes, 'is that women's quick passions will be more effectively engaged by such formulations'; they were expected to be more emotionally than intellectually responsive.¹³³

V

The large-scale and protracted warfare of the French revolutionary period, as Colley concludes, had a paradoxical impact on the British home front, in that it both underlined the perceived functional differences between men and women and yet enlarged the boundaries of women's activities.¹³⁴ Clearly, only a minority of women engaged heavily in patriotic activism, and an even smaller proportion published their views on the war. These naturally reflected their social class and their era in the attitudes they revealed. As McCarthy remarks of one of them: 'To read through Piozzi's political remarks from the 1790s is to encounter again and again sharable sentiments emphatically expressed.'¹³⁵ Yet it is clear that women also had identifiably characteristic concerns and emphases in the issues they discussed. They believed that they had a particular interest in this war against France, as potentially the chief victims of a French invasion and conquest. Women were often more emotional in their writing than were men, and generally more concerned with the personal and the private than with the massed and the public. Female writers were universally horrified by the violence and cruelties of warfare and, while they could be as chauvinistically British

¹³² Cottrell, 'English Views', p.97 n.1.

¹³³ Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*, p.18.

¹³⁴ Colley, *Britons*, p.262.

¹³⁵ McCarthy, *Hester Thrale Piozzi*, p.220.

as male writers, they also more often noticed and rebuked this attitude than did men. Most did not comment much on the British government's conduct of the war, but some of those who did showed themselves to be as well-informed as most male observers. Peace was, if anything, an event still more desired by women than by men, whatever their political stance; none seemed to be war-crusaders of the intensity of a Burke or a Windham, ready to sacrifice all possibility of peace until monarchical government was restored in France, however much they might wish for such an outcome.

It is also true to say that it was a war which offered women a substantially greater opportunity to become involved in its issues and activities than any previous conflict had done. This was partly because it was such a long war and involved such a great proportion of the British population. It had a direct impact on ordinary women as well as on professional male soldiers and sailors. This was also a war in which more emphasis was consciously placed on ideological issues than any since the wars of religion and, since the intervening period had seen an escalation both of the press and of literacy, there was more place for women to become actively involved. Indeed, it might be argued that part of the war was fought not on the battlefields of Europe, but in the realm of domestic propaganda and, in that sphere, women, if not so numerous as men, fought alongside them, and some—Hannah More, Hester Piozzi, Mary Wollstonecraft, Helen Maria Williams—might certainly have been accorded high ranking posts on either side.

8. The Voice of the People? Public Opinion and the Wars Against Revolutionary France

J.A.W. Gunn has traced the establishment of public opinion as an acknowledged force in British politics to the second half of the eighteenth century, through the development of extra-parliamentary political activity and 'a corresponding softening of the traditional animus against recognizing the popular voice outside Parliament.'¹ By the 1780s, he argues, there was a growing awareness of public sentiment and an anxiety to know how it could be gauged. The growth of popular interest in domestic politics, and the need for popular cooperation with the government's measures if Britain were to wage a successful war against revolutionary France, meant that the 1790s saw both loyalists and opposition politicians concerned not only to measure public opinion but also, in some degree, to manipulate or control it.

The question immediately raised is, of what did public opinion consist? Who were 'the public' and what were their opinions? Were they Burke's 'people', a political elite of around 400 000, or could they be said to include the population of Britain? Gunn, in line with Burke, restricts his enquiry to the electorate as the section of the nation with whose opinions politicians were most concerned. Hannah Barker has widened the definition to include all those who read newspapers and whose views were thereby shaped and reflected in newspaper columns, while H.T. Dickinson has studied the political activities of all extra-parliamentary classes of society.² The war against revolutionary France was not an abstract political question affecting only the traditionally politically literate classes. The debate over the French Revolution itself had, by its passion and breadth of application, burst the seams of the governing and literary ranks of society. Church and King clubs rallied against the Dissenters' campaign to have the Test Acts repealed in 1790; radical societies sprang up throughout 1792; political riots multiplied towards the end of that year; and Loyal Associations mushroomed from late November 1792 onwards.³ The outbreak of the conflict itself demanded a response from an even wider cross-section of the nation, for it involved a greater proportion of the British population than any previous war had done, in terms of military participation, of vulnerability to a French invasion, and of liability for supplying the material resources required to finance and supply the war

¹ J.A.W. Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property. The Process of Self-Recognition in Eighteenth-Century Political Thought* (Kingston and Montreal, 1983), p.263.

² Hannah Jane Barker, 'Press, Politics and Reform: 1779-1785', unpublished D. Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 1994), pp.267-8, 273; H.T. Dickinson, *The Politics of the People in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 1995).

³ On popular interest in politics inspired by the French Revolution debate, see also 'The Politicians', a graphic print published in the *Carlton House Magazine* (1 December 1792), BMC 8133.

effort. In a sermon preached to Volunteer companies in London in late 1798, the Rev. William Vincent told them that 'the interests of all are so interwoven with yours, that you are the people in reality yourselves.'⁴ By this time, after the Defence of the Realm Act (1798), the Volunteers were truly a mass movement, since able-bodied men in all classes of society were eligible to join. How is it possible to know the views of ordinary people two hundred years ago? Some left behind diaries, letters and memoirs; another measure of educated opinion is the vast array of caricatures and other graphic prints published on the war—evidence, as M.D. George points out, of an intense public interest.⁵ Barker suggests that the opinions expressed in newspapers, especially the London press, reflected the attitudes of their readership to a significantly greater extent than is usually allowed, largely due to market economics.⁶ Caricaturists and graphic satirists set out more self-consciously to reflect as well as to shape public reactions to the events and implications of the war.⁷ Indeed, the character of John Bull was appropriated and further developed by them in this decade as a representative observer of home and foreign affairs: a common Englishman outside the governing classes, typically urban or rural middle-class, but sometimes artisan, and, importantly, neither loyalist nor reformer, but equally critical of both the government and the Foxite Whigs. He represented the patriotism of common sense rather than either unthinking submission or factious opposition, and he was a figure abused by both government and Opposition.⁸ Diana Donald has suggested that loyalists tried to use him as a representation of British patriotic spirit against revolutionary France, but that the inconsistency between this free-born Englishman and the model they wished to promote of a self-effacing and obedient loyalist was too great for Bull to be kidnapped by them for their own sole use. This was forcefully demonstrated by the contribution to the pamphlet war between loyalists and radicals of the skirmish over the 'Bull family letters' in late 1792 and early 1793. Most of these were loyalist, written by the Rev. William Jones, but various radical

⁴ Rev. William Vincent, 'A Sermon Delivered in the Church of St. Magnus, London Bridge, November 25; and in the Church of Allhallows the Great and the Less, Thames Street, December 1798; Before the Associated Volunteer Companies, in the Wards of Bridge, Candlewick, and Dowgate', in *Sermons on Faith, Doctrines, and Public Duties* (2 vols.: London, 1817), i, 286. See also Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.137.

⁵ George (ed.), *Catalogue of Political and Personal Satires*, vi, p.xi; on the audience of graphic prints, see H.T. Dickinson, *Caricatures and the Constitution, 1760-1832* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.13-15; John Brewer, *The Common People and Politics, 1750-1790s* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.45-7.

⁶ Barker, 'Press, Politics and Reform', p.266.

⁷ George (ed.), *Political and Personal Satires*, vii, p.xi; Dickinson, *Caricatures and the Constitution*, pp.19-20.

⁸ See, for instance, BMC 8328, James Gillray, 'John Bull's Progress' (3 June 1793); *ibid.*, 8458, Isaac Cruikshank, 'John Bull Humbugg'd alias Both-Ear'd' (12 May 1794); *ibid.*, 8664, 'Billys Hobby Horse or John Bull Loaded with Mischief' (6 July 1795); *ibid.*, 8797, Gillray, 'John Bull & his Dog Faithful' (20 April 1796).

answers characterized John Bull as a plain man and his brother Thomas Bull as the servile dupe of the propertied classes.⁹

Clearly, it is easier to discover the views of the literate classes than those of people who could not leave a written record of their opinions, but some impression may also be gained from the various activities in which people became involved because of the war, although it is as difficult to know their motives for participation as it is to be sure of the motives of politicians and others whose attitudes have been recorded.¹⁰ Most people, as Clive Emsley points out, were probably only aware of and concerned with the conflict in so far as it affected their own lives;¹¹ but many more were thus affected, either directly or vicariously, than had been the case even in the American war little more than a decade previously. There were troops stationed in Britain in substantial numbers; militia ballots required lists of all men within a certain age-range; and the Volunteers created further military visibility and experience.¹² Sea-ports were constantly busy, and those who lived near the coast must have been aware of the threat of a French invasion. 'A great meeting at Reepham today,' reported Parson Woodforde of Norfolk on 23 April 1798, 'respecting all People arming themselves &c. against an Invasion of this Country from the French &c. which is much talked of at present by all kinds of People especially the poor.'¹³ War taxes affected everyone; and bonfires and illuminations to celebrate victories happened all over the country. The information and views of much of the population were probably very crude, but no less valid for that.

This chapter seeks first to demonstrate the concern of the political elite with public opinion in the 1790s and their endeavours to influence it. It then attempts to trace popular pro-war, anti-war and uncommitted popular behaviour and the influences on public opinion to show both its fluidity in its reactions to the war in general and its lack of substantial engagement with the issues behind the government's hostility to revolutionary France.

⁹ Diana Donald, 'John Bull and Problems of Picturing "The People" in the 1790s', unpublished paper given at a conference of the North West Branch of the British Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies on 'National Identities in Eighteenth-Century Britain' (September 1994); George (ed.), *Political and Personal Satires*, vii, pp.xvii-xviii. For examples of radical Bull family letters, see *A Few Words, but No Lies; from Roger Bull to his Brother Thomas* (London, 1792), and [Ann Jebb], *Two Penny-Worth of Truth for a Penny; or a True State of Facts: with an Apology for Tom Bull in a Letter to Brother John* (London, 1793), which are both replies to the loyalist *One Penny-Worth of Truth from Thomas Bull to his Brother John* (London, 1792).

¹⁰ See Colley, *Britons*, p.285.

¹¹ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.26.

¹² See, for instance, Parson Woodforde's diary entries for 7 and 15 May 1795, printed in John Beresford (ed.), *The Diary of a Country Parson: the Reverend James Woodforde, 1758-1802* (5 vols.: Oxford, 1924-31), iv, 194, 197. See also p.277 below.

¹³ *Ibid.*, v, 113-4, 23 April 1798; see also *ibid.*, v, 115, 25 April 1798.

When ministers spoke of the need to persuade 'the country' of the benefits of their policies, they were usually thinking chiefly of MPs and then of the electorate. The ministry's experience in 1790 over the Ochakov affair had shown it that it could not automatically raise sufficient public support for a war even to defend what it described as 'vital interests'. Nevertheless, domestic stability and popular cooperation with the government's war effort were also essential if it was to succeed. Loughborough warned Dundas in April 1792 that Talleyrand had been heard to estimate that fewer than two hundred people had deliberately sought a revolution in France. 'I hope there are not so many who mean a change of this Government [in Britain],' he continued, 'but they will count on this side all who appear indifferent. The Lookers on make the mob.'¹⁴ David Eastwood has written that 'the problem of the 1790s...became the creation of an accommodation between an elitist society struggling for survival and the broad mass of the people who, whilst denied a formal political role, nevertheless might possess the capacity either to make or to break an anti-revolutionary and anti-democratic state.'¹⁵ This was not only necessary in order to defeat the radical enemy at home, by producing sufficient support for the existing social and political order, but also in order to defeat the revolutionary enemy abroad, by producing enough support for the war effort to supply the necessary manpower and material resources, both to defend Britain and to defeat France. It was essential that the British population should be persuaded that the demands made on it by the government in aid of the war were vital to the survival of the familiar surroundings of British life: that the war was for their own benefit as well as for that of their social and political superiors.

The government was sufficiently concerned with mass public opinion to direct local officials and other channels—customs officers, the Post Office, local government officials, magistrates and hired spies—to gather information about it for them. Ministers were clearly delighted, if surprised, by the huge response of loyalty to the Royal Proclamation in December 1792—Grenville thought it 'little less than miraculous', and James Bland Burges at the Foreign Office believed it to have provided an ideal opportunity for going to war against France.¹⁶ After the conflict began, ministers repeatedly insisted on their certainty of public support for the war

¹⁴ Peter Jupp, *Lord Grenville*, p.137; Loughborough to Dundas, 24 April 1792, quoted in Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution on British Politics and Society', pp.38-9.

¹⁵ Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State', p.150.

¹⁶ *Dropmore*, ii, 359, Grenville to Auckland, 18 December 1792; BL Add. MSS 34446, ff.161-v., Burges to Auckland, 18 December 1792.

and the basic loyalty of the great majority of the population.¹⁷ 'Our public spirit is excellent,' Grenville assured Auckland on 15 February 1793. In October 1799 Canning was able to write to Lord Mornington that 'the country is more right than it has been at any time within my remembrance.'¹⁸ Nevertheless, they were always aware of the challenge in reality of keeping the public supportive of the war, especially at times when the British army was suffering defeat on the Continent, or when it appeared that the French government was ready to consider negotiations for peace, as in early 1800. John Ehrman claims that Pitt's preoccupation with domestic unrest in the spring of 1794 contributed to his neglecting to send off the first and second crucial instalments of the Prussian subsidy for a whole month, which meant that the Prussian troops it was to pay for arrived too late to take part in that year's campaign. Piers Mackesy comments that whenever riots broke out due to high bread prices in the years of poor harvests (1795-6 and 1798-9), 'Parliament's enthusiasm for the war would wilt'. Grenville, impatient with popular pressure on the government to seek peace in October 1797, told Pitt that 'If this country could but be brought to think so, it would be ten thousand times safer...to face the storm, than to shrink from it.'¹⁹

Ministers were also conscious that any pledge to specific objectives in the conflict might commit them to staying in the war after public support for it had run out.²⁰ Auckland wrote to Pitt in October 1793, after British setbacks at Dunkirk and Toulon: 'I am angry with John Bull who lazily & peevishly by a good Fire side neither calculates nor comprehends the Difficulties nor the Necessity of the War, but criticizes the Ministers for doing what they could not avoid, & the Generals for not doing impossibilities.'²¹ The conservative elite was convinced that radical opposition to the government or to the war was largely based in the lower classes—the Duke of Portland told the King in July 1797 that the only people likely to attend radical meetings in Nottingham 'cannot consist of more than two or three hundred people at most of the lowest and most contemptible description.' 'It is not draymen, porters, and handicraftmen, who are qualified to speak the sentiments of the City of London,

¹⁷ See, for example, *P.H.*, xxx, 1328, Canning, 31 January 1794.

¹⁸ BL Add. MS 34448, f.187, Grenville to Auckland, 15 February 1793; Canning to Lord Mornington, 20 October 1799, quoted in Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, p.6. See also Aspinall, *LCGIII*, iii, 112, Dundas to George III, 29 August 1798.

¹⁹ John Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.340-2; Piers Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, p.6; *Dropmore*, iii, 378, Grenville to Pitt, 8 October 1797. See also David Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State', p.162.

²⁰ Mackesy, *War Without Victory*, pp.38-9; Colin Jones, *Britain and Revolutionary France*, p.21.

²¹ BL Add. MSS 45728, ff.176-v., Auckland to Pitt, 7 October 1793. See also BL Add. MS 37844, f.14, Pitt to Windham, 13 October 1793, on the defeat at Dunkirk; and BMC 8434, 'Billy in the Dumps or how to Manage Affairs on the Next Meeting of Parliament' [March 1794].

upon the question of War and Peace,' sniffed one conservative pamphleteer.²² Yet the government was aware that, as Roger Wells remarks, 'if the most vociferous of the war's opponents found themselves outnumbered, recurrent crises [of grain supply] threatened to galvanise a massive accretion of support for peace.'²³

Not surprisingly, ministers were, if anything, still more concerned with the loyalty of the armed forces than they were with that of the general population. Investigations had been made as early as summer 1792 of the loyalty of army regiments at home, and their commanding officers continued to report to the Home Office on the attitudes of their troops. Colonel Vyse reported that, despite his regiment's loyalty, Norwich was an imprudent place to station troops because of its radicalism.²⁴ Sir Gilbert Elliot wrote to his wife in February 1793 of the enthusiasm he had noticed among soldiers embarking at Greenwich for Holland: 'their zeal and eagerness to go on service, which does not promise to be child's play, was very striking. The regret and dejection of those who were left was no less so.'²⁵ The naval mutinies of 1797 were probably as alarming to the government as any other single event of the decade. Moreover, the elite was anxious not only about disaffected civilian mobs, but also about pro-government rioters. 'I do not admire riots in favour of Government much more than riots against it,' Grenville had stated in 1791, and this apprehension was not overcome by the government's later desire to obtain the voluntary services of loyalist activists throughout the country. The Lord Mayor of London, for instance, was 'wearied out with this Overflow of Joy', in which Quakers and others had been attacked for their non-participation, after the news of the Glorious First of June.²⁶ Hannah More was criticized by many loyalists for her attempts to educate the poor even into a solidly conservative understanding of the world, because by pointing them towards literacy and independent thought she seemed to be undermining traditional social and political hierarchies.²⁷

²² Aspinall, *LCGIII*, ii, 605, Portland to George III, 31 July 1797; *Reasons Against National Despondency* (1797), p.157 n. See also Aspinall, *LCGIII*, iii, 415, Portland to George III, 21 September 1800.

²³ Roger Wells, *Wretched Faces: Famine in Wartime England, 1793-1801* (Gloucester, 1988), p.2.

²⁴ PRO HO 42/20/386-395, Colonel Oliver De Lancey to Dundas, 13 June 1792, reporting on regiments in the north of England; *ibid.*, 42/22/436-9, Col. R. Vyse to Evan Nepean, 20 November 1792—De Lancey made a similar comment about Manchester on 30 November 1792 (*ibid.*, 42/22/625-6).

²⁵ Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 118, Elliot to his wife, 26 February 1793.

²⁶ *Dropmore*, ii, 136, Grenville to Auckland, 22 July 1791; PRO HO 42/31/171-4, Paul Le Mesurier to Nepean, 12, 13 and 14 June 1794.

²⁷ A similar irony is depicted in BMC 8836, Gillray, 'Opening the Budget' (17 November 1796), where John Bull submissively yields his breeches full of money to Pitt's grasp, but thereby becomes *sans-culotte*.

It has already been shown that the government tried to harness local and voluntary efforts to its cause in an attempt to reach as many of the population as possible with the conservative view of the conflict; and that religion, too, was enlisted to encourage the submission and loyalty of the masses.²⁸ Grenville was so harassed by Opposition taunts at the end of 1792 that there was no such spirit of insurrection in the country as ministers had claimed when they called out the militia and assembled Parliament, that he planned to form a small secret committee from both Houses of Parliament to gather enough evidence, without publicizing specific names or facts, for ministers to be able to assert that there had been subversive designs and plans in agitation in Britain.²⁹ Ministers pursued public relations policies which would have mass impact, prosecuting cheap radical publications rather than, for instance, William Godwin's *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), which cost three guineas.³⁰ Victories were magnified to eclipse the impact of war failures, as in the case of the 'Glorious First of June', a real but small victory achieved by Lord Howe and his fleet in the midst of their failure to prevent a convoy of grain from America arriving safely on French shores.³¹ The vast numbers of conservative tracts distributed freely to the lower orders in the 1790s may well indicate upper-class anxiety rather than lower-class appetite, as John Dinwiddy has remarked. Yet, as Gayle Trusdel Pendleton points out, despite the wide understanding among the political elite that public opinion required energetic cultivation, only twenty-seven peers (eighteen of them bishops) and twenty-four MPs made the effort themselves to publish pamphlets in the conservative cause. Over half of the loyalist tracts and pamphlets were written by government-hired and church writers.³²

Public opinion, of course, did not concern only the government. 'The public' was argued over and used, as passive beneficiaries or victims of the war, by both conservatives and opposition forces in their own clashes. As Frank O'Gorman has written, 'The issues thrown up by the war were acting as an ideological wedge between politicians and so momentous were the causes at stake that men of all shades of opinion were carrying them to the country.'³³ Conservatives hoped that the strength of loyalist opinion in the country would destroy radical hopes at home and allow ministers to act decisively against revolutionary France. The opposition

²⁸ See chapters 3 and 6 above; also Lady Eglantine Wallace, *A Sermon Addressed to the People, Pointing Out the Only Sure Method to Obtain a Speedy Peace and Reform* (London, [1794]).

²⁹ BL Add. MS 34446, f.381, Grenville to Auckland, 1 January 1793.

³⁰ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.391.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p.349.

³² John Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism', p.47; Gayle Trusdel Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.193.

³³ O'Gorman, *The Whig Party*, p.163.

emphasized the sufferings of the poor during war-time in the hope that the government might be panicked into retreat. 'Who will say it is safe to oppress the people in their present temper, by still heavier exactions?' warned one writer just before the outbreak of war.³⁴ They scorned conservative claims that the nation was united behind the government against France. 'When declaimers take upon them to assert that the nation is unanimous, they should at least condescend to enquire what are the sentiments of the most numerous classes of mankind. They are as much concerned in the progress and events of a war as any aristocratic confederacy.' Dennis O'Bryen refused to accept that even the government believed that the Volunteers and militia, 'selected factions, accoutred capapee(*sic*)', represented the British people. David Hartley, on the other hand, warned that rank and file soldiers ordered into action against their fellow-citizens, always had the practical power of veto.³⁵ The opposition too, however, could be frustrated by a lack of clear popular cooperation with their wishes: 'John Bull knows well enough that he has been gulled all through the war; but, with his characteristic simplicity, he prefers being duped by the ministry, to the acknowledgement of being outwitted by the superior sagacity of those who warned him of his danger.'³⁶

II

A consideration of popular pro-war behaviour during the 1790s may help to bridge the gap between David Eastwood's heterogeneous popular patriots and their many, ambiguous and unreliable reasons for patriotic action, and Robert Dozier's militant loyalists, criticized by Eastwood for their simple delineation as a uniformly solid group of government supporters.³⁷ Popular pro-war behaviour was motivated by three broad categories of factors: the impact of active loyalism, direct individual profit and the influence of specific issues relating to this particular war against revolutionary France. This section discusses these influences and their effects in turn in an attempt to examine the evidence for public support for the British government's cause in its struggle against the French republic.

Naturally, the conservative elite hoped that the role of active loyalism would be significant in promoting popular conservatism and support for the war. Their clear advantage over the forces of opposition was the inherent conservatism of the majority

³⁴ *The Crisis Stated*, p.14; see also Holcroft, *Letter to Windham*, pp.32-3, 38-40.

³⁵ *The Crisis Stated*, p.15; O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* pp.73-4, 82; Hartley, *Argument on the French Revolution*, p.36.

³⁶ O'Bryen, *Utrum Horum?* p.108.

³⁷ Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State', p.147.

of the population, supporting the monarchy, the landed hierarchy and the Church of England—the political and social establishment. There was therefore a lack of genuine mass support for radicalism among the population. Widespread contentment with the existing order meant that suggestions of possible change to a familiar system were greeted with suspicion, particularly such a violent and chaotic change as was demonstrated by the revolution in France. In other words, most people in Britain believed that they had an interest in the continuation of the *status quo*.³⁸ Ian R. Christie concludes a study of popular conservative opinion with the claim that, on the basis of the forces making for social and political stability, and demonstrated by the balance of loyalist and anti-establishment crowd demonstrations, ‘the instinct of the people coincided with the thought of the critics of the Revolution’.³⁹

The vast outflow of conservative propaganda may well have had some effect in convincing, or at least assuring, those who could read it. Pendleton has claimed that ‘the dominance of conservative authors, titles, and total sales in proportions so overwhelming...make safe the flat assertion that English [literate] public opinion was conservative rather than reformist.’ The *Anti-Jacobin Review* sold 2500 copies weekly, a substantial sale for such virulent loyalism.⁴⁰ Pamphlets, tracts and broadsides were written to suit both middle-class and working-class readers, and the ideas of Burke and other popular conservative writers such as Bowles and More were repeated frequently in loyal addresses.⁴¹ While Pendleton urges caution concerning the use of the term ‘popular literature’, arguing that literature for ‘the real masses’ was largely apolitical, she also refers to research which shows that the French Revolution provoked a great number of loyal statements in mass literature, ‘after two centuries of popular lampoons on the royal family and the Church’, thus indicating that the majority of the population at the bottom end of the social scale were not oblivious to events played out on the international political stage.⁴² Pamphlets written locally may

³⁸ H.T. Dickinson, ‘Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism’, in *idem.* (ed.), *Britain and the French Revolution* (London, 1989), pp.104, 123; Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, pp.19-20; Ian R. Christie, ‘Conservatism and Stability in British Society’, in Philp (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics*, pp.170-6; Schofield, ‘English Conservative Thought and Opinion’, p.15; Fry, *The Dundas Despotism*, p.174. See also BMC 8695, Richard Newton, ‘Spectacles for Republicans’ (24 November 1795); ‘King, Lords and Commons!’ [1792] and ‘Britons are Happy, if They will Think So’, in the British Library collection of songs and broadsides at 648.c.26, ff.56, 99.

³⁹ Christie, ‘Conservatism and Stability’, p.187, c.f. John Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics in England and Wales, 1790-1810* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983), p.222.

⁴⁰ Pendleton, ‘English Conservative Propaganda’, pp.219, 183, 301, 357, 462, 489-90, 501; Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.66.

⁴¹ Dickinson, ‘Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism’, pp.106, 108-12. See also Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.163.

⁴² Pendleton, ‘English Conservative Propaganda’, pp.162-4, referring to Robert Collison, *The Story of Street Literature, Forerunner of the Popular Press* (London, 1973).

well have had more impact in their communities than more famous and complex publications;⁴³ and propaganda such as free public dinners, victory celebrations, military parades and church sermons needed no literacy at all.⁴⁴

The social intimidation practised generally and locally by militant loyalists may also have had some effect, though equally unmeasurable: aside from stopping the mouths of the more prudent radicals, it may well have persuaded some to display loyalty more ostentatiously than they might otherwise have done, if at all. The sedition trials in Scotland in 1793-4 and the treason trials in England in 1794, despite the acquittals of the English radicals, increased public distrust of political reform and reformers.⁴⁵ Foxite politicians were often portrayed by caricaturists as Jacobins, wearing the tricolour or the *bonnet-rouge* and attempting to collaborate with a French invasion of Britain, thus reflecting popular disapproval of Opposition 'factiousness' during war-time and suspicion that it overlay a deeper malign disposition.⁴⁶

⁴³ Eastwood, 'Patriotism and the English State', p.151.

⁴⁴ James Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary by Joseph Farington, R.A.* (8 vols.: London, 1922-8), i, 220, 15 November 1797; Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 149, 29 November 1798; W. Branch Johnson (ed.), 'Memorandums for...': *The Diary Between 1798 and 1810 of John Carrington, Farmer, Chief Constable, Tax Assessor, Surveyor of Highways and Overseer of the Poor, of Bramfield in Hertfordshire* (London and Chichester, 1973), pp.48-9, 13 June 1800.

⁴⁵ Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', pp.192-3.

⁴⁶ See, for example, BMC 8140, [Dent], 'Jacobine Wigs, or, Good Night to the Party' (18 December 1792); *ibid.*, 8142, Cruikshank, 'A Right Honourable versus a Sans Culotte' (20 December 1792); *ibid.*, 8291, [Dent], 'A Right Hon.ble Democrat Dissected' (15 January 1793); *ibid.*, 8305, Cruikshank, 'The Solicitor General for the French Republic' (18 February 1793); *ibid.*, 8317, [Cruikshank], 'Which way Shall I turn me How shall I Decide' (25 March 1793); *ibid.*, 8426, [Cruikshank], 'A Peace Offering to the Genius of Liberty and Equality' (10 February 1794); *ibid.*, 8443, Sayers, 'John Bull's Sacrifice to Janus a Design for a Peace-offering to the Convention' (17 March 1794); *ibid.*, 8448, [Gillray], 'The Noble Sans-Culotte' (3 May 1794); *ibid.*, 8457, Sayers, 'Egalité' (12 May 1794); *ibid.*, 8461, Sayers, 'A Gazette Extraordinary from Berkeley Square' (31 May 1794); *ibid.*, 8468, Cruikshank, 'The Renunciation of an Ex Noble now become A Republican Sans Culotte Citizen' (10 June 1794); *ibid.*, 8479, [Gillray], 'The Eruption of the Mountain' (25 July 1794); *ibid.*, 8612, Gillray, 'French-Telegraph making Signals in the Dark' (26 January 1795); *ibid.*, 8614, Gillray, 'The Genius of France Triumphant,—or—Britannia Petitioning for Peace' (2 February 1795); *ibid.*, 8636, J. Sayers, 'Frontispiece' (14 April 1795); *ibid.*, 8639, Sayers, 'The Bedford Level' (14 April 1795); *ibid.*, 8640, Sayers, 'The St[anhope] a Republican Gunboat constructed to sail against Wind and Tide' (14 April 1795); *ibid.*, 8642, Sayers, 'French Invasion upon Dutch Bottoms' (14 April 1795); *ibid.*, 8644, Gillray, 'Light Expelling Darkness, —Evaporation of Stygian Exhalations, —or—the Sun of the Constitution rising superior to the Clouds of Opposition' (30 April 1795); *ibid.*, 8648, 'The Real Cause of the Present High-Price of Provisions, or, a View on the Sea Coast of England, with French Agents, smuggling away Supplies for France' (11 May 1795); *ibid.*, 8681, [Gillray], 'The Republican-Attack' (1 November 1795); *ibid.*, 8826, Gillray, 'Promis'd Horrors of the French Invasion,—or—Forcible Reasons for Negotiating a Regicide Peace' (20 October 1796); *ibid.*, 8839, Newton, 'Billy's Political Plaything' (21 November 1796); *ibid.*, 8979, Gillray, 'End of the Irish Invasion;—or—The Destruction of the French Armada' (20 January 1797); *ibid.*, 8992, Gillray, 'The Table's Turn'd' (4 March 1797); *ibid.*, 9020, [Cruikshank], 'Divertions of Purley, or Opposition Attending their Private Affairs' (5 June 1797); *ibid.*, 9039, Gillray, 'Le Coup de Maitre' (24 November 1797); *ibid.*, 9160, Cruikshank, 'The Raft in Danger or the Republican Crew Disappointed' (28 January 1798); *ibid.*, 9167, Gillray, 'The Storm rising,—or—the Republican Flotilla in Danger' (1 February 1798); *ibid.*, 9204, [Cruikshank], 'The Republican Soldier!' (12 May 1798); *ibid.*, 9240, Gillray, 'New Morality;—or—The promis'd Installment of the High-Priest of the Theophilanthropes, with the Homage of Leviathan and his

Certainly there were many mass demonstrations of loyalty and support for the war, involving great numbers of ordinary people, which must have been stimulated by government and loyalist publicity and propaganda. There were huge numbers of loyal addresses, resolutions and petitions sent to the King—many more than their radical counterparts, although it naturally took substantially more bravado to organize a reformist or anti-war petition than one applauding the activities of the government. Loyalist and pro-war addresses were sent from towns, counties, religious bodies, universities, theatres, magistrates, manufacturers, merchants, Volunteer and militia corps, clubs and societies. Some 386 were sent in response to the May 1792 Royal Proclamation; a further hundred arrived in late 1792-93; and nearly six hundred declared their support for the King after he was attacked on his way to open Parliament in October 1795.⁴⁷ These were no doubt usually organized by active loyalists, but they carried substantial numbers of signatures—11 000 on one from Liverpool and 8032 on one from the Merchant Taylors Hall in December 1792, and 2500 on a pro-war address from Portsmouth and Portsea in November 1798—which suggests that non-activists were also involved, whether voluntarily or under pressure.⁴⁸

Subscriptions also must have attracted the support of many ordinary subjects. The fund established by the Association at the Crown and Anchor Tavern for the relief of sailors' wives and children received support not just from other Loyal Associations, but also from 'ladies of fashion', philanthropists, church congregations, Eton College, town and county corporations and army regiments; the *Observer* claimed on 10 March 1793 that so widespread an activity must be an 'irrefutable attestation' of the war.⁴⁹ The Loyalty Loan of December 1796 was such a success that the loyalists of the Crown and Anchor Tavern offered to transmit to Parliament any further funds which members of the public, disappointed by being too late to contribute to the originally stipulated £18 million, should wish to donate for the public good. D.G. Vaisey says of the 1798 Voluntary Contribution that, because of the threat of invasion, 'from being a self-interested substitute for an unpopular form of taxation

Suite' (1 August 1798); *ibid.*, 9248, Gillray, 'Nelson's Victory;—or—Good News operating upon Loyal Feelings' (3 October 1798); *ibid.*, 9262, [Cruikshank], 'A Sleepy Dose to the Jacobines—or—the Effects of Nelson's Victory' (3 November 1798); *ibid.*, 9371, R.S. and J. Chapman, 'The Night Mare' (1 May 1799). Occasionally, radicals were portrayed in this manner also, instead of Foxites: see *ibid.*, 8617, Sayers, 'An Address from the Citizens of N[orwic]h to the National Convention' (14 February 1795).

⁴⁷ Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, p.1; Dickinson, 'Popular Loyalism in the 1790s', p.529; Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism', p.113.

⁴⁸ See the *London Gazette*, 18-22 December 1792 and 10-13 November 1798.

⁴⁹ Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, p.109. See also *ibid.*, pp.148, 164; and Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, iii, 380, 19 October 1792, for a clerical subscription in aid of French émigré clergy.

[the tripled assessed taxes], it became an end in itself which converted into patriotism and sacrifice those feelings which, without such an outlet, might well have become panic'. It raised £2 826 000, 'only marginally less than the gross income from all the assessed taxes'.⁵⁰ Moreover, substantial local subscriptions were collected to fund public military parades and dinners for soldiers stationed in the vicinity on such occasions as the King's birthday.⁵¹

Crowds were involved in activities such as burning effigies of Thomas Paine and pro-war street demonstrations. According to H.T. Dickinson, 'Although there were several instances of incitement by the local elite, there were simply too many crowds capable of enlisting considerable local support to support the contention that they were merely hired bands of ruffians or simple-minded folk easily incited or manipulated by their superiors.'⁵² Wealthier people had other opportunities to demonstrate their support for the war. One journalist, reporting on the second performance of one of Joseph Haydn's 'London Symphonies', the 'Military' (no. 100), said of the audience's response:

...the middle movement was again received with absolute shouts of applause. Encore! Encore! Encore! resounded from every seat: the Ladies themselves could not forbear. It is the advancing to battle; and the march of men, the sounding of the charge, the thundering of the onset, the clash of arms, the groans of the wounded, and what may well be called the hellish roar of war increase to a climax of horrid sublimity!⁵³

Ladies wore decorative items of dress to express their loyalty—'King and Constitution' favours in their hair or caps in 1792, 'Camperdown bonnets' in 1798. A graphic satire of 1799 ridiculed the fashion among London fops of feigning war-wounds when the British army returned from Holland.⁵⁴

Recruitment was a major opportunity for ordinary people to show practical support for the government and the war. There were 35 000 regular British troops in 1793; by 1795 there were nearly 125 000, and the 1790s in general saw the highest returns from recruitment for the eighteenth century. The combination of the bounty, natural patriotism and the anticipated excitement and drama of military life attracted a

⁵⁰ Vaisey, 'The Pledge of Patriotism', pp.212, 223.

⁵¹ *Voluntary Aid, for Assisting the Public Revenue, Under the Direction of Parliament* (post 20 December 1796), British Library, 648.c.26, f.71; Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, iv, 202, 4 June 1795.

⁵² Dickinson, 'Popular Conservatism and Militant Loyalism', p.119.

⁵³ Quoted by David Wyn Jones in the programme for the BBC Prom. Concerts, 24 August 1992, p.11.

⁵⁴ Stanley Ayling, *George the Third* (London, 1972), p.358; Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 129, 25 July 1798; BMC 9447, [Cawse], 'The Bond Street Battalion—or the Hospital Staff from Holland!!!' (18 November 1799).

substantial number of men to the Volunteers and the supplementary militia as well as to the army and the navy. William Rowbottom of Oldham reported a 'universall pant for glory' as well as financial hardship among enlisting local weavers. One Scotsman serving in the rank and file at the siege of Valenciennes in 1793 wrote home to his mother of his desire to 'do more yet for my King & Country's saik'. Clive Emsley has estimated that 10% of all adult British males served in the regular armed forces during the whole 1793-1815 period, and that this proportion rises to one-sixth if the Volunteers and militia are included.⁵⁵ While it is true that rather more of these served after 1802 than before, it is undeniable that very substantial numbers of British men participated in the military defence of their country even before the Peace of Amiens.

The bounties offered to enlisting soldiers and sailors raises a second motivation for ordinary people to demonstrate support for the war: the expectation or experience of direct profit. Professional soldiers and sailors were one group who might fall into this category. Others who profited from the conflict were industrialists who manufactured woollen goods, boots and shoes, iron, copper, arms and ships. Workmen in certain trades were also able to benefit from the increased demand for their labour in wartime: coal seamen, dockers and tailors, and, as Emsley points out, it was the agitation of cotton weavers in the north-west for increased wages which provoked the government to pass the Combination Acts of 1799-1800. Joseph Farington noted in 1795 that 'Caulkers & Shipwrights who understand their business well can get twenty shillings a day.—In peaceable times, they can earn when paid by the piece, half a guinea a day.'⁵⁶ It was even reported that the town of Okehampton had been 'much improved by the French prisoners on parole—one of the blessings of war!' and Parson Woodforde received in October 1797 a 'very impertinent' letter from his nephew 'at Norman Cross near Stilton Huntingdonshire now attending the French Prisoners at that Place as a Surgeon and Apothecary.'⁵⁷

Third, certain events and aspects of the war against France encouraged pro-war behaviour from ordinary people. The execution of Louis XVI on 21 January 1793 had a huge impact on British people. Immediately after the first news of it arrived, on

⁵⁵ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.485, 488; Rowbottom quotation from Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.37; *ibid.*, pp.74, 133; soldier's quotation from Aspinall, *LCGIII*, ii, 86, Corporal George Robertson to his mother, 1 August 1793. See also Colley, *Britons*, pp.302-3, 308; A.D. Cameron, *Living in Scotland, 1760-1820* (Edinburgh, 1969), p.129; *A Sketch of the Campaign of 1793, Parts I and II* (London, 1795), pp.26-9, 'written in the trenches before Valenciennes, and enclosed in the preceding letter'; NMM, PAR/188 (1-2)—letters home from Lord St. Vincent's young nephew, at sea from 1793 at the age of eleven.

⁵⁶ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.31-2, 83-4; Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, i, 92, 22 February 1795.

⁵⁷ A.D. Harvey, *English Literature and the Great War with France* (London, 1981), pp.4-5; Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 71, 12 October 1797.

23 January, theatre performances were cancelled and calls for war were made, both in street demonstrations and in the press. Chauvelin, the French envoy, wrote to his superiors that he could not so much as leave his house 'without being exposed to the insults and ignorant ferocity of that part of the nation that is still called here the mob'.⁵⁸ The horror and curiosity created by the news of the execution were still lingering on 23 March 1793, when the *Sun* advertised a five-foot high model of a guillotine on show in London and reported it to be a great public attraction. The popularity of George III grew, and he became a national asset to be defended against a nation of regicides.⁵⁹ This appealed to a natural prejudice in favour of the monarchy among the majority of the British population, and the frequent references to the execution of the French king in conservative propaganda throughout the decade may suggest that it was an issue which continued to raise anti-gallican sentiment. Caricaturists often portrayed George III as synonymous with John Bull, the representative of the ordinary British people.⁶⁰

Popular xenophobia and, in particular, anti-gallicism were in any case hardly new characteristics of the British people. The eighteenth century had erected a tradition of commercial, territorial, military, religious and political difference and rivalry with France. Gerald Newman describes vigorous anti-French cultural stirrings from the mid-eighteenth century, in such writers as John Brown, Thomas Day and Tobias Smollett. In February 1792 the *York Courant* expressed the view that 'the Annihilation of the Power of France will prove a permanent Peace in the End to Europe, whether Monarchy be restored or Democracy triumphs.'⁶¹ In the 1790s atheism and republican chaos replaced Catholicism and absolute monarchy as the French foils to British Protestantism and mixed government, but this merely inflamed the popular sense of ideological rivalry. With the outbreak of war, traditional British pride and suspicion of the French became hostility and downright bigotry among the British population. Revolutionary France was associated with blood, destruction, licence, wickedness and impiety. Previous images of the French as foolish and ragged

⁵⁸ Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', p.452; *Dropmore*, ii, 373, Grenville to Auckland, 24 January 1793; BMC 8304, Gillray, 'The Blood of the Murdered crying for Vengeance'; Chauvelin quotation from Pendleton, 'English Conservative Propaganda', p.373. See also Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.17.

⁵⁹ Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', p.282.

⁶⁰ See, for example, BMC 8458, [Cruikshank], 'John Bull Humbugg'd alias *Both-Eared*' (12 May 1794) and *ibid.*, 8664, 'Billys Hobby Horse or John Bull Loaded with Mischief' (6 July 1795). See also Carretta, *George III and the Satirists*, pp.244-346, on the increasing identification of the king with the nation as presented through visual imagery in the 1790s.

⁶¹ Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner* (Cambridge, 1986), pp.34-5, 46; Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, pp.80ff., 105ff., 111, 133ff.; *idem.*, 'Anti-French Propaganda and British Nationalism', pp.386-91; the *York Courant*, 28 February 1792, quoted by Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, p.17. See also Colley, *Britons*, pp.17, 24-5.

were superimposed on the ideology of warfare in graphic prints and caricatures.⁶² This did not mean that the French threat was taken lightly, however; prints often emphasized the strength, aggression and atrocities of the enemy and, in the later 1790s, Napoleon was seized upon as the embodiment of the rapacious French revolutionary enemy.⁶³ Wariness of the impoverished *émigrés* was described among different classes of people, from the fashionable world of Joseph Farington to the humbler one of the Rev. James Woodforde, although they were apparently fighting a common enemy with the British.⁶⁴

The other side of British anti-gallicism was a pride in Britain itself, an instinctive patriotism, another useful tool for pro-war propaganda and displayed in many of the prints.⁶⁵ The outbreak of hostilities produced a natural flow of patriotism, especially since the French had declared war, and many probably expected an early success.⁶⁶ London theatre audiences had been singing a popular verse celebrating the opening of hostilities with France for a week before they were actually declared. Robert Dozier quotes the *Sussex Weekly Advertiser* of 14 March 1793, a paper not always wholly in approval of government measures: 'never was there a war in which the spirit of the nation seemed more roused and interested than the present.'⁶⁷ Victories achieved by the British army or navy were powerful stimulants to pro-war sentiment and behaviour: the national anthem and other patriotic songs were sung by audiences at the theatre, illuminations were made and street celebrations were held.⁶⁸ After the difficult year of 1797, the victories at the Nile and Minorca lifted the public

⁶² For example, BMC 8340, [Cruikshank], 'The Murder of Custine. French Gratitude or Republican rewards for Past Services' (16 September 1793); *ibid.*, 8473, Carlton House Magazine, 'The Republicans on a March' (1 July 1794); *ibid.*, 9355, Gillray, 'Egyptian Sketches' (12 March 1799); *ibid.*, 9361, Gillray, '"Tirailleur Francais, et Cheveau Leger de l'Armée du Pacha de Rhodes"—Evolutions of French Mounted Riflemen' (12 March 1799).

⁶³ See BMC 8435, Cruikshank, 'A Republican Beau. A Picture of Paris for 1794' and 'A Republican Belle. A Picture of Paris for 1794' (both 10 March 1794); *ibid.*, 8630, 'Sans Culottes Fundamentally Supplied in Dutch Bottoms' (10 March 1795); *ibid.*, 9156, Gillray [and Frere], 'The Apotheosis of Hoche' (11 [Jan.] 1798). On Bonaparte, see *ibid.*, 9431, [Cawse], 'Satans return from Earth Discovered in Council' (30 November 1799); *ibid.*, 9523, [Gillray], 'Buonaparte Leaving Egypt' (8 March 1800); *ibid.*, 9534, Gillray, 'Democracy;—or—a Sketch of the Life of Buonaparte' (12 May 1800).

⁶⁴ Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, i, 3, 21 July 1793; *ibid.*, pp.14-15, 9 November 1793; *ibid.*, p.182, 3 January 1797; Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 206, 20 July 1799.

⁶⁵ See, for example, BMC 8497, 'Freedom' (17 November 1794); *ibid.*, 9719, 'The Consular Toy' ([April 1801]).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 8417, [Dighton], 'Here's a health to the Duke of York wherever he goes' ([Feb. 1793]); *ibid.*, 8321, [Dent], 'The great Dumourier taking French leave of the Netherlands' (April 1793); *ibid.*, 8322, [Cruikshank], 'A Dose for Dumourier' (11 April 1793); *ibid.*, 8345, [Cruikshank], 'A Member of the French War Department Raising Forces to Conquer all the World' (2 November 1793).

⁶⁷ Murley, 'Origins and Outbreak', p.505; Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, p.111.

⁶⁸ Aspinall, *LCGIII*, ii, 215 n.2; Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 150, 30 November 1798; Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, i, 53, 11 June 1794 (Farington shows a hint of irritation with the boisterous festivities, however).

spirit and increased public tolerance for the continuation of the struggle. 'Even the sensation produced by...untoward events, such as the stoppage of the Bank, was mitigated by that darling and most natural subject of English exultation, Great Naval Victories,' Lord Holland wrote.⁶⁹ Sheridan agreed: 'If ever man loved man; if ever one part of the people loved another, the people of this country love the seamen'.⁷⁰

Perhaps a more powerful motivation still to loyalty during the war was the real threat of a French invasion.⁷¹ It was probably this which stimulated so swift and so generous a response to the government's appeal in December 1796 for a Loyalty Loan; and it is hardly surprising that the Duke of York was able to report to the King that 'nothing could exceed the zeal and loyalty which has been shewn by all the people' at Fishguard when the French attempted to land there in February 1797.⁷² The King himself noted in 1801 that 'the not having had any [recent] attempt of invasion has certainly in a great measure cooled the ardour and dilligence of the Volunteer Corps and perhaps of the embodied militia.'⁷³ Songs attempting to inspire courage and loyalty in the face of this threat reminded their listeners of famous English victories over France in the past, such as Poitiers and Crècy.⁷⁴ Prints expressed both

⁶⁹ Holland, *Memoirs*, i, 9. For prints showing 'jingoism' on various naval victories, see: BMC 8471, Cruikshank, 'Lord Howe they run, or the British Tars giving the Carmignols a Dressing on the Memorable 1st of June 1794' (25 June 1794), also *ibid.*, 8469-70; *ibid.*, 8831, Cruikshank, 'A Peep into Saldhana Bay or Dutch Perfidy Rewarded' (7 November 1796), on the capture of the Cape of Good Hope; *ibid.*, 8992, Gillray, 'The Table's Turn'd' (4 March 1797), on Jervis's victory at Cape St. Vincent; *ibid.*, 9034, [Cruikshank], 'The Dutch in an Uproar or the Batavian Republic crying for Winter!' (15 October 1797), on Camperdown; *ibid.*, 9250, Gillray, 'Extirpation of the Plagues of Egypt;—Destruction of Revolutionary Crocodiles;—or—The British Hero cleansing ye Mouth of ye Nile' (6 October 1798); *ibid.*, 9257, Gillray, 'John Bull taking a Luncheon:—or—British Cooks cramming Old Grumble-Gizzard with Bonne-Chère' (24 October 1798); and *ibid.*, 9251-3, 9255-6, 9259, 9269, 9278, all on the Battle of the Nile; *ibid.*, 9264, Rowlandson, 'High Fun for John Bull or the Republicans Put to Their Last Shift' (12 November 1798); and *ibid.*, 9268, Gillray, 'Fighting for the Dunghill:—or—Jack Tar settling Buonaparte' (20 November 1798), both on British naval victories in general. On allied military success, see *ibid.*, 8313, Cruikshank, 'Dumourier and his Aid du Camp on full March to Seal up the Papers of the Prince of Orange, by order of the Convention but prevented by Messrs. Frog & Co.' (13 March 1793); *ibid.*, 9388, Gillray, 'The State of the War—or—the Monkey-Race in danger' (20 May 1799); *ibid.*, 9403, [Gillray], 'French Generals retiring, on account of their health;—with Lepaux presiding in the Directorial Dispensary' (20 June 1799); *ibid.*, 9412, Gillray, 'Allied-Powers, Un-Booting Egalité' (1 September 1799).

⁷⁰ *P.H.*, xxxiii, 641, Sheridan, ? May 1797. BMC 9277, [Cruikshank], 'A Singular Situation, or I by-myself I in the Dumps!!' (7 December 1798) reflects the wide opposition provoked by Sir John Sinclair's proposal to reduce naval manpower.

⁷¹ For the genuine anxiety produced by this menace, see, for example, Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 108-9, 1 April 1798; *ibid.*, v, 329, 6 August 1801.

⁷² Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.641; Aspinall, *LCGIII*, ii, 543, the Duke of York to George III, 25 February 1797. *Ibid.*, ii, 544-5, the Duke of Portland to George III, 26 February 1797, notes that 'innumerable numbers of colliers, peasantry, farmers, laborers' and others, of both sexes and all ages, were involved. See also Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution', p.55; *idem.*, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.67; Colley, *Britons*, pp.305-6; Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, p.126.

⁷³ Aspinall, *LCGIII*, iii, 580, George III to Lord Hobart, 22 July 1801.

⁷⁴ For instance, 'Invitation to Repel Invasion' ([1796]) and 'The Patriot-Briton; or, England's Invasion, 1796' (1796), in the Madden Collection, Cambridge University Library, 1796.15.60, 64.

apprehension concerning the horrors which might be produced by a successful revolutionary invasion and at the same time the conviction that a French invasion could never succeed (the defending and triumphant British soldiers were often pictured as humble labourers, or with wooden limbs).⁷⁵

Popular behaviour indicated some support for this particular conflict, but it was largely a variation on the theme of a natural war-time cooperation with the government due to instinctive patriotism and self-defence—a traditional ‘jingoism’ with counter-revolutionary clothes on. Loyal addresses sent in the wake of the failed peace negotiations of 1796 and 1797 which expressed disappointment also declared resignation to the hardships of war and support for the government against an unreasonable enemy.⁷⁶ Pro-war songs frequently extolled the benefits of the British constitution and reviled French attempts to destroy it, seeing it as a chief stake in the war,⁷⁷ but it seems likely that most popular pro-war usage of terms referring to Jacobinism was superficial—the current language of abuse towards radicals, putative grain-hoarders and all causes, French and British, of the war-time troubles of the ordinary people. One handbill called for ‘Success to our Army and Navy. No Exportation of Grain. No Jacobins. No Assignhatts.’ Joseph Farington, on a private tour of the country, noted that ‘There is an excellent public Library at Leeds, which has been established 50 years or upwards.... There is also a Library which probably from having been established by certain people is called the Jacobin Library. —The other, the Old Library, on the contrary is called the Anti-Jacobin Library.’⁷⁸

III

However popular pro-war sentiment may have been, it was nevertheless neither unanimous nor constant. In Sheffield, Nottingham and Surrey, opposition was voiced to the loyal addresses to be sent in response to the May 1792 Royal Proclamation, and ten counties and 81 cities and towns appear not to have responded formally at all. A

⁷⁵ On the expected results of a successful invasion of Britain, see BMC 9180-3, Dalrymple and Gillray, ‘Consequences of a Successfull French Invasion’ (1 March 1798). Prints ridiculing the French attempt: *ibid.*, 9176, ‘The Grand Republican Balloon’ (24 February 1798); *ibid.*, 9187, Rowlandson, ‘England Invaded, or Frenchmen Naturalized’ (16 March 1798); *ibid.*, 9207, Rowlandson, ‘Rehearsal of a French Invasion as Performed before the Invalids at the Islands of St. Marcou, on the Morning of ye 7 May 1798’ (18 May 1798).

⁷⁶ See, for instance, the addresses printed in the *London Gazette* from Bath (10-14 January 1797), the City of London (7-11 February 1797), Nairn (12-16 December 1797), Lanark (26-30 December 1797) and Bradford (13-17 February 1798).

⁷⁷ For example, ‘Death or Victory; or, the British War Song’ ([1796]), Madden Collection, Cambridge University Library, 1796.15.56.

⁷⁸ ‘Britons are Happy, if They will Think So’; Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, i, 314-5, 27 August 1801.

majority of those present at the meeting in Durham to discuss resolutions in response to the December proclamation, rejected them, and the loyalist minority had to convene separately in order to issue their declaration.⁷⁹ Moreover, Roger Wells has suggested that opposition to scarcity, land enclosure, technological innovation, grain exportation and military service, together with tensions over poor relief, produced a more unstable situation in rural areas in the 1790s than is sometimes assumed to have been the case.⁸⁰ There was domestic unrest in the autumn of 1792 over a poor harvest and high prices, as well as that possibly stimulated by radicals (the passing of a new Corn Act that year made it more difficult to tell political from economic causes).⁸¹ If these did not necessarily produce anti-war activism, it is unlikely that those already in such straits over matters of subsistence would have been happy at the prospect of war with all its concomitant burdens and distresses. Popular anti-war sentiment was produced mainly by the hardships of the wartime experience for ordinary people and partly, especially for the literate classes, by a simple desire, for whatever reason, to criticize the government, and it resulted in verbal and physical protests of various kinds. As with loyalism and pro-war sentiment, it is difficult to distinguish wholly between non-organized radicalism or pacifism and sporadic popular anti-war behaviour.⁸²

Historians disagree on how the 1790s fit into a broadly improving trend in the economic situation—whether their relative difficulty was eclipsed by the general upward trend or whether it was a significant departure from it.⁸³ Whatever the case, it seems clear that in this decade population increase and repeatedly poor harvests forced food prices up: the cost of living rose by 30% between 1790 and 1795, and its rate of increase doubled after the outbreak of the war in early 1793. Wages also rose, but not sufficiently to swallow the gap, and underemployment and rising taxation aggravated the difficulties. Economic trends were perhaps of little interest to those who struggled to make ends meet and, whether or not the war was genuinely to blame, it was an easy target. Petitions containing demands for peace began to arrive in Westminster in 1795, which also saw one of the worst harvests of the decade.⁸⁴ Trade was constricted by war, but more by financial fragility and the closure of European and corresponding colonial markets than by French attacks on British shipping or the fear of it, so that

⁷⁹ Dozier, *For King, Constitution and Country*, pp.21, 82. See also Ginter, 'The Loyalist Association Movement'.

⁸⁰ Wells, 'English Society and Revolutionary Politics', pp.192-5, 212-4; idem., *Insurrection: The British Experience, 1795-1803* (Gloucester, 1983, 1986).

⁸¹ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.217-20.

⁸² c.f. Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform', esp. pp.51-6.

⁸³ Compare Christie, 'Conservatism and stability', p.177 and Wells, 'English Society and Revolutionary Politics', p.189.

⁸⁴ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.443, 451-2, 475-6. On popular antipathy to wartime taxes, see 'A New Song, To Spend All Our Cash in the Wars' ([1793]), British Library, 648.c.26, f.74.

when merchants and trading companies began to find other markets and trading routes, it recovered considerably. This recovery of economic health, however, according to Emsley, did not always reach ordinary working men.⁸⁵ From 1795 bread and an end to the war were two demands regularly made by rioting crowds.⁸⁶

The middle and commercial classes also felt the financial burden of the British war effort, however. The *Sun* was already reporting on 7 March 1793 that the departure of the Foot Guards for Holland had deprived the coal wharfs of London of a substantial number of labourers, encouraging demands for a rise in wages by those who remained and found their labour a scarce resource. The caricaturists' frequent depiction of John Bull as a character overloaded, ground down, bleeding, or in some other way suffering from government taxation reflected public preoccupation with wartime stringency. Often these prints questioned the validity of the government's claim of necessity for high taxes, suggesting that the French threat was not so menacing as it was declared to be.⁸⁷ Some graphic prints criticized the hypocrisy of wealthy statesmen and bishops appointing general fasts and the bitter irony of requiring the poor to fast.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.616; Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.28-9, 33. See also the Manchester address to 'the landed, commercial and manufacturing interest' printed in the *Morning Chronicle*, 20 September 1793; Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.74.

⁸⁶ Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution', p.48.

⁸⁷ See Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, p.616; also BMC 8488, [Hewitt], 'Favorite Chickens, or the State of Johnny's Farm-yard in 1794' (1 October 1794); *ibid.*, 8620, Cruikshank, 'Doctor Sangrado Releiving John Bull of the Yellow Fever' (25 February 1795); *ibid.*, 8628, Newton, 'One of the Swinish Multitude. A Sister to the Guinea Pig. The Guinea Pig' (6 March 1795); *ibid.*, 8629, Gillray, 'Leaving Off Powder,—or—A Frugal Family saving the Guinea' (10 March 1795); *ibid.*, 8646, Cruikshank, 'No Grumbling' (6 May 1795), all on the new tax on hair powder; *ibid.*, 8654, [Gillray], 'John Bull Ground Down' (1 June 1795); *ibid.*, 8658, [Gillray], 'Blindmans-Buff—or—Too Many for John Bull' (12 June 1795), reflecting displeasure with spending British taxes on foreign loans and subsidies; *ibid.*, 8669, [O'Keefe], 'A Locust' (1 August 1795); *ibid.*, 8797, [Gillray], 'John Bull and his Dog Faithful' (20 April 1796); *ibid.*, 8808, [West], 'Johnny in a Flattening-Mill' (25 May 1796); *ibid.*, 8842, Gillray, 'Begging no Robbery,—i.e.—Voluntary Contributions;—or—John Bull, escaping a Forced Loan' (10 December 1796), on the Loyalty Loan; *ibid.*, 8990, 'Bank-Notes,—Paper Money,—French Alarmists,—O, the Devil, the Devil!—ah! poor John Bull!!!' (February 1797), on the stopping of Bank cash payments in February 1797; *ibid.*, 8998, Newton, 'The New Paper Mill or Mr Bull Ground into 20 Shilling Notes' (12 March 1797); *ibid.*, 9025, Newton, 'The Inexhaustible Mine!' (22 June 1797); *ibid.*, 9038, 'The Wonderful Strong Man!' (15 November 1797); *ibid.*, 9157, Cruikshank, 'Voluntary Subscriptions' (16 January 1798); *ibid.*, 9287, 'Days of Prosperity; or, Congratulations for John Bull!' ([1798]); *ibid.*, 9337, [Ansell], 'The Stratagem Alias the French Bug-a-Bo or John Bull Turn'd Scrub' (1 January 1799); *ibid.*, 9338, Cruikshank, 'John Bull in Training for the year 1799!!' (1 January 1799); *ibid.*, 9400, O'Keefe, 'Supply for the Allies Billys Wonderful Goose Laying Golden Eggs' (6 June 1799); *ibid.*, 9430, Gillray, 'Effusions of a Pot of Porter,—or—Ministerial Conjurations for Supporting the War' (25 November 1799); *ibid.*, 9525, [Cawse], 'Smuggling Corn from Egypt!!!' (18 March 1800); *ibid.*, 9544, [Ansell], 'The Rival Accoucheurs or Who Shall Deliver Europe' (10 July 1800); *ibid.*, 9707, 'Continental Amusements or John Bull Paying the Piper' (17 February 1801); *ibid.*, 9714, [Cruikshank], 'John Bull at the Sign, the Case is Altered' (2 March 1801); *ibid.*, 9859, 'A Peaceable Pipe; or, a Consular Visit to John Bull!!!' (14 April 1802), a post-war reflection on war taxation.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 8323, Newton, 'Fast Day!' (19 April 1793); *ibid.*, 8428, Cruikshank, 'A General Fast in Consequence of the War!!' (14 February [1794]); *ibid.*, 8801, Cruikshank and Woodward, 'General

Prints and poems lamented the cruelties of the battlefield and the bereavement suffered due to war. James Gillray went to Flanders to observe the British army in the summer of 1793 and, along with Isaac Cruikshank, he began to represent the Duke of York and his entourage as living in luxury in stark contrast to the suffering and cruelty around him, thus breaking with the early patriotic enthusiasm for the war.⁸⁹ After the first months of the conflict, a simple weariness with war and its effects and a natural desire for peace grew widespread:

I am a brave fellow, I love my country and king,
And wish to do right to both country and him;
But I still love the poor, that I always will do,
And them that won't join me they're not true blue.

Then fill up a bumper,
Let's drink to the men that strive to make peace.⁹⁰

One graphic print showed ten characters from different walks of life musing on the blessings of peace—the alderman could again afford to dine on turtle, the sailor would squander his prize-money and there would be better business for various others.⁹¹ Loyal addresses supporting the war often also expressed the hope for a swift, honourable and lasting peace; and Emsley quotes one Philip Vincent of Camborn, near Truro, who wrote in 1797: 'I suppose there is not so loyal a place in the King's Dominions as this. I suppose they would turn out to a Man for their King and Country...at the same time they wish for peace.'⁹² It was, indeed, largely due to the impression that a majority in the country was impatient for peace that the ministry

Fast' (4 May 1796). See also the 'Song on the General Fast' (February 1795), Madden Collection, Cambridge University Library, 1796.15.49.

⁸⁹ BMC 8327, Gillray, 'Fatigues of the Campaign in Flanders' (20 May 1793); 8328, Gillray, 'John Bull's Progress' (3 June 1793); *ibid.*, 8329, [Cruikshank], 'Preparing for Action or an English man of War Engaging Two Dutch Doggers' (9 June 1793)—behind a satirized Duke of York stands a homesick officer; *ibid.*, 8333, Cruikshank, 'He would be a Soldier or the History of John Bull's Warlike Expedition' (1 July 1793); *ibid.*, 9418, Woodward [and Cruikshank], 'The Beauties of War!!' (12 October 1799)—this may have been especially powerful because it was published during a British land campaign, in Holland. For examples of poetry on this theme, see 'Written After Seeing Opie's Picture of the Tired Soldier in the Late Exhibition', in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, lxi (August 1799), 696; 'A War Poem', in *The British Poetical Miscellany* (1799), pp.7-8; both also in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.240-2.

⁹⁰ 'A Good Wish for Old England', Madden Collection, Cambridge University Library, 1785.4.698. See also 'A New Irish Song', in the British Library, 648.c.26, f.73, on the war's lack of clear objectives; BMC 8792, Cruikshank (28 March 1796), on general war-weariness and doubtfulness over Pitt's sincerity in declaring his willingness to negotiate with the French.

⁹¹ BMC 9106, T. Squibb, ['Effects of Peace'], (24 July 1797).

⁹² See, for example, addresses printed in the *London Gazette* for November and December 1798; Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.63.

attempted to treat with France in 1796 and 1797. 'Lysons hears,' wrote Farington in August 1796, 'that if Pitt does not make peace before November He must go out'.⁹³

Public anti-war sentiment may have been provoked more than anything else by the actual exigencies of war for ordinary people, but anti-war propaganda probably played some part in suggesting further reasons for discontent. This need not have been printed literature; radicals addressing customers in taverns, street demonstrations, graffiti and so on may have encouraged some who were beginning to grow impatient with the continuation of the war and its burdens to verbalize their dissatisfaction and perhaps even disaffection. Seditious language berating the King and the Duke of York for failing to appreciate the hardships of war for the generality of their people began to appear as early as 1793. A handbill condemned George III for missing a theatre performance to show his sorrow at the death of Louis XVI but enjoying the show as usual after fifteen Londoners were killed (crushed?) at the Haymarket Theatre. 'Who would not Die for such a Gracious King!!!' it ended sarcastically.⁹⁴ One London tailor told a discontented crowd that the Duke of York's father was 'a Fool unless it is at Burthening the People and you like Fools to put up with it nay all the Family are Fools and Rogues'. A notice put up in Bath in 1800 demanded 'Peace and large Bread or a King without a head'.⁹⁵ It is more likely, however, as Emsley warns, that ordinary people who voiced such sentiments wanted food and peace rather than political change as the radicals did.⁹⁶

The caricaturists satirized the failings of Britain's allies, representing them as greedy, cruelly rapacious and unreliable, preying on the long-suffering John Bull, but this could be ambiguous: it did not necessarily entail blame for the British government.⁹⁷ There was, however, as the corollary of popular joy at British

⁹³ Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, i, 158, 3 August 1796; Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.647-8.

⁹⁴ British Library, 648.c.26, f.35.

⁹⁵ Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', p.115; Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution', p.53.

⁹⁶ Emsley, 'Revolution, war and the nation state', p.112.

⁹⁷ BMC 8472, 'The Progress of the Campaign' (June 1794); *ibid.*, 8477, [Cruikshank], 'The Faith of Treaties Exemplified or John Bull's last Effort to Oblige his False Friends' (17 July 1794); *ibid.*, 8478, Cruikshank, 'Back Front and Side View of a Dutch Light Horseman with their Improved Method of Mounting' (24 July 1794); *ibid.*, 8483, [Newton], 'A Dance Round the Poles' (5 August 1794); *ibid.*, 8607, [Cruikshank], 'Royal Recreation' (7 January 1795); *ibid.*, 8608, [Cruikshank], 'The Coalition Scene on the Continent' (12 January 1795); *ibid.*, 8613, [Cruikshank], 'The first Articles in Requisition at Amsterdam or the Sans Culotts become touts Culotts' (29 January 1795); *ibid.*, 8633, Woodward and Cruikshank, 'A New Dutch Exercise' (1 April 1795); *ibid.*, 8791, 'How to Throw an Army into Confusion' (March 1796); *ibid.*, 8821, Cruikshank, 'The British Menagerie' (5 July 1796); *ibid.*, 9285, [Ansell], 'A Dilemma or the German Macheath' (27 December 1798); *ibid.*, 9387, [Cruikshank], 'General Swarrow, towing the French Directory into Russia!!' (16 May 1799)—satires on the Russian General Suvarov were usually double-edged, showing pleasure at his resounding victories over the French armies, but refusing to forgive him for his bloody campaigns against Poland; *ibid.*, 9390, Gillray, 'Field-Marshal Count Suvarrow-Romniskoy' (23 May 1799);

victories, deep disappointment and frustration with British military or naval failure. The campaign of 1793, while hardly an unmitigated triumph, could still be argued to hold out hopes of future success; but the disappointments of 1794 and 1795 in the Low Countries provoked much public criticism. By 1796, the continental situation was going from bad to worse, while the British army was largely removed from the scene of action, leaving the British war effort in the hands of the navy, so that the public could only look on in helpless frustration.⁹⁸ The prints captured these sentiments, mixing contempt with anger.⁹⁹ Farington criticized what he thought to be unjust public carping in December 1793:

Everybody, expecting that it was in consequence of Lord Howe having taken the French ships he was left chasing, were disappointed on finding the guns were fired on account of our troops in the West Indies having gained possession of part of the Island of St. Domingo. As the public attention was not directed to that object, it was less felt on account of Lord Howes returning unsuccessful.¹⁰⁰

Popular protests against the war were made in various forms and against various intermediary targets. The most common targets of the graphic satirists were, unsurprisingly, the government—especially Pitt—and the King.¹⁰¹ They were also

ibid., 9392, Cruikshank, 'Genl Swallow Destroying the French Army' (1 June 1799); ibid., 9393, 'Suwarrow giving the French Directory a taste of the knout!' (June 1799); ibid., 9408, [Cruikshank], 'The Russian Colossus making the Tour of Italy, France & carrying home a few Presents' (15 July 1799); ibid., 9415, [Gillray], 'The Magnanimous Ally' (17 September 1799); ibid., 9422, [Cawse], 'The Great Swallow all!!! Disgorging or French Bullie too hot for Bear's Stomach' (29 October 1799); ibid., [Gillray], 9700, 'The Magnanimous Ally' (20 January 1801).

⁹⁸ Ehrman, *The Reluctant Transition*, pp.380, 427, 614.

⁹⁹ BMC 8351, Cruikshank, 'The Wet Party or the Bogs of Flanders, a new Song' (7 December 1793); ibid., 8425, Gillray, 'Pantagruel's victorious return to the court of Gargantua, after extirpating the Soup-Meagre's of Bouille Land' (10 February 1794); 8488, [Hewitt], 'Favorite Chickens, or the State of Johnny's Farmyard in 1794' (1 October 1794); ibid., 8656, Gillray, 'A Keen-Sighted Politician finding out the British Conquests' (8 June 1795); ibid., 8659, Gillray, 'A Keen-Sighted Politician Warming his Imagination' (13 June 1795); ibid., 8676, Will Hanlon, 'The State Caterpillar' (1 September 1795)—a reference to the Quiberon disaster; ibid., 9231, 'Whitsunday Duellists' (22 June 1798); ibid., 9418, Woodward [and Cruikshank], 'The Beauties of War!!' (12 October 1799)—this may have been a response to the bad news from Holland; ibid., 9421, [Cawse], 'Opening the Sluices or the Secret Expedition' (October 1799).

¹⁰⁰ Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, i, 24-5, 9 December 1793.

¹⁰¹ BMC 8341, [Cruikshank], 'Oh! Dear What Can the Matter Be' (21 September 1793)—on Richmond, the unpopular Master of the Ordnance until November 1793; ibid., 8496, [West], 'A New Song, Written by Captain Morris, Addressed to John Bull and his numerous Family' (5 November 1794); ibid., 8500, 'Wonderful Exhibition!!! Signor Gulielmo Pittachio The Sublime Wonder of the World!' (November 1794); ibid., 8516, 'Plan of Mud Island, off the Kingdom of Corsica' ([1794]); ibid., 8652, Hanlon, 'The Triumphal Entry of Alexander the Great, Into Babylon after the Conquest of Persia' (27 May 1795); ibid., 8653, Gillray, 'A True British Tar' (28 May 1795)—the Duke of Clarence; ibid., 8682, [Gillray], 'The Sleep-Walker', (1 November 1795); ibid., 8691, Gillray, 'The Royal Bull-Fight' (21 November 1795); ibid., 8705, [Cruikshank], 'A Recent Escape' (21 December 1795); ibid., 8980, Gillray, 'The Giant-Factotum amusing himself' (21 January 1797); ibid., 8994, [Cruikshank], 'Billy a Cock-Horse or the Modern Colossus amusing himself' (8 March 1797); ibid., 9001, Newton, 'Retort Courteous or the Disloyal Address Returned without Ceremony' (27 March 1797)—on Portland's rejection of the Common Hall's address to the King, asking him to dismiss the

targets of lower-class criticism, since they had the power to make war and peace. In contrast with the radicals, who presented George III as the dupe of wicked ministers or the European despots, popular complaints against him perceived him as holding the power to stop the war if he realized how great was the suffering it imposed on his subjects.¹⁰² Local government officials were also attacked: an anonymous letter to George Phelps, chief magistrate of Tewkesbury, was printed in August 1795 in the *London Gazette*, demanding that he convene a meeting without delay to consider organizing a petition for peace to the King, and threatening 'a leaden bullit through your brains' if he did not comply. An indiscriminately anti-establishment paper found at Hammersmith in 1794 commanded

Deal Destruction to the Foe
Lay the *Haughty Monarch* Low
Pitt Dundas & Hood shall fall
Damn the *King* & Damn them all
Arise & Destroy the Tyrant.¹⁰³

Soldiers and sailors, as the agents of war, were also butts of criticism and sour ridicule. As the handbill quoted above shows, military and naval commanders were singled out for attack as names associated with the conflict. Lord Howe apparently talked of resigning his command of the Channel Fleet before his triumph on the 'Glorious First of June', 1794, because of the regular attacks made on him in the newspapers and prints.¹⁰⁴ Ordinary members of the armed forces, however, were also assailed. Volunteers, militiamen and regular soldiers stationed locally in barracks could be very unpopular, being associated with disorder and brawling, unjust recruiting strategies and military government. Officers walking around Norwich after dark risked being attacked.¹⁰⁵ The prints reflected this unpopularity, usually ridiculing

ministry as the first step to peace; *ibid.*, 9047, Dighton, 'The Hopes of Britain Blown Away Thro' a Speaking Trum-Pitt' (11 December 1797); *ibid.*, 9166, Kay, 'The Modern Cain's Lament' (1798); *ibid.*, 9195, 'A Political Hypochondriac!!' (18 April 1798); *ibid.*, 9703, [Cruikshank], 'Bloody News Bloody News!!!' (1 February 1801); *ibid.*, 9865, [Williams], 'John Bull viewing Billy's Preparations for his Birth-Day' (18 May 1802); *ibid.*, 9869, [Williams], 'The Brazen Image erected on a Pedestal wrought by Himself' (29 May 1802).

¹⁰² See Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', pp.113-4.

¹⁰³ *London Gazette*, 8-11 August 1795; PRO HO 50/385, f.524, Sir George Yonge to Nepean, 3 June 1794, encl.

¹⁰⁴ Greig (ed.), *The Farington Diary*, i, 63, 18 July 1794. See also BMC 8352, Gillray, 'A French Hail Storm,—or—Neptune loosing sight of the Brest Fleet' (10 December 1793); *ibid.*, 8353, [Cruikshank], 'HOW a Great Admiral, with a Great fleet, went a Great way, was lost a Great while, saw a Great sight—& then came home for a Little water' (10 December 1793); *ibid.*, 8657, 'What a Cur 'tis!' (9 June 1795)—on the public perception of Admiral Sir Roger Curtis's self-promotion; *ibid.*, 8789, 'Favourite Amusement at Head Quarters' (March 1796)—further criticism of the Duke of York's 1793-4 campaign in Flanders; *ibid.*, 8790, 'A Council of War Interrupted' (March 1796); *ibid.*, 8978, [Gillray], 'The Lion's Share' (2 January 1797).

¹⁰⁵ Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, pp.22, 25, 172-3; Wells, *Insurrection*, p.79; Harvey, *English Literature*, p.11; PRO HO 42/27, f.223, petitions on the cost of barracks for troops.

the Volunteers for their lack of horsemanship and general military skills (John Kay was particularly scathing about the Edinburgh Volunteers), or the regular soldiers in their training camps in the south of England. Sometimes they displayed a greater bitterness concerning military enforcement of law and order.¹⁰⁶ Despite the wide popularity of the navy, the residents of Sheerness, reported to have fled their homes during the mutiny of 1797 from fear and in order to make room for the soldiers called in to resist the mutineers, may have waned in enthusiasm somewhat; and various addresses were sent to Westminster that year severely criticizing the revolt.¹⁰⁷

The practices of crimping and impressment to recruit for the army and navy, and balloting to recruit for the militia, were deeply unpopular, and there were consequently many riots in specific protest against instances of these throughout the 1790s.

Come rouse my good fellows to arms,
And follow the sound of the drum,
If you'd cut a fine figure in story;
Inlist in my regiment, come:
For wonderful sums we will promise,
Which we possibly never will pay;
But of this my brave comrades be certain,
You'll be shot at for sixpence a day.¹⁰⁸

As early as February 1793 crowds engaged violently with press-gangs in Whitby and in South Shields, and a group of colliers disembarked from their coal-ship near Patrington, some way up the River Humber from their usual port of Hull, in order to

¹⁰⁶ BMC 8513, John Kay, 'Edinburgh Royal Volunteers' (1794); *ibid.*, 8733, Kay, 'Leith Volunteer' (1795); *ibid.*, 8734, Kay, 'To the Right About-Face' (1797); *ibid.*, 8429, Cruikshank, 'The Auckward Squad' (19 February 1794); *ibid.*, 8459, 'Essex Calve-lry for Internal Defence' (12 May 1794); *ibid.*, 8476, Cruikshank, 'John Gilpin the Second, or City Light Horse Volunteers Performing their Evolutions' (17 July 1794); *ibid.*, 8492, [Cruikshank], 'Hampshire Fencibles Protecting their Bacon' (20 October 1794); *ibid.*, 8503, Woodward [& Rowlandson], 'Village Cavalry Practising in a Farm-Yard' (18 December 1794); *ibid.*, 8597, [Cruikshank], 'Suffolk Rats protecting their Cheese or the County Fencibles called to Arms' (1 January 1795); *ibid.*, 8619, Bunbury [and Dickinson], 'A General on the Staff. An Inspecting General' (23 February 1795); *ibid.*, 8805, Gillray, 'The Dissolution; or—the Alchymist producing an Aethereal Representation' (21 May 1796); *ibid.*, 8840, Gillray, 'Supplementary Militia, Turning Out for Twenty Days Amusement' (25 November 1796); *ibid.*, 8977, Woodward [and Cruikshank], 'Supplementary Cavalry and Infantry' (1 January 1797); *ibid.*, 8991, Gillray, 'St. George's Volunteers charging down Bond Street, after clearing the Ring in Hyde Park, & Storming the Dunghill at Marybone' (1 March 1797); *ibid.*, 9026, 'Look at Me, I'm an Object!' (28 June 1797); *ibid.*, 9221, 'Lobsters for the Ladies i.e. Jessamin Soldiers or a Veteran Corps Going on Duty' (2 June 1798); *ibid.*, 9239, [Ansell], 'Military Portraits—or a Brace of Heroes' (30 July 1798); *ibid.*, 9247, [Ansell], 'It is not all Gold that Glitters, or Volunteers settling about Pedigree and Precedence' (1 October 1798).

¹⁰⁷ *The Times*, 3 June 1797; for addresses, see the *London Gazette*, June-July 1797.

¹⁰⁸ 'Serjeant Kite's Invitation to the Swinish Multitude To Be Shot at for Sixpence a Day', Madden Collection, Cambridge University Library, 1796.15.45. See also BMC 8447, 'Manning the Navy' ([1 May 1794]); *ibid.*, 8484, [Cruikshank], 'Kiddnaping, or a Disgrace to Old England' (26 August 1794); *ibid.*, 8486, [Cruikshank], 'Modern Mode of Beating Up for Volunteers!' (1 September 1794).

avoid the press-gang that was thought to be operating from a warship docked there; in Uig, Lewis, military recruiting parties were forcefully resisted. In March a large crowd at Norwich tried to persuade army recruits to desert.¹⁰⁹ Crowds of Londoners rioted in August 1794 against crimps and balloting for the militia.¹¹⁰ The press-gang was driven away by the people of Campbeltown, Argyll, in February 1795. Four or five hundred people were involved in the disturbance at Denbigh in March 1795 caused by opposition both to balloting for service in the navy and the militia and to the exportation of grain. A few days later there was trouble in Halifax when magistrates, overseers of the poor and churchwardens tried to persuade the poor to volunteer for the navy, because those authorities insisted on keeping two-thirds of each man's bounty in trust for him until he returned—the men naturally wanted the whole sum immediately.¹¹¹ In 1796 the Supplementary Militia Act, increasing the size of the English force, caused riots in Lincolnshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Cumberland, Merionethshire, Shropshire, Gloucestershire and Derbyshire.¹¹² Sir Gilbert Elliot told Lady Palmerston in August 1797 that Scotland was 'in a flame from one end to the other' over the Bill introducing a system of militia into Scotland for the first time. The trouble began in Eccles, in Berwickshire, and spread, in just over a month, through the Borders, the Lothians, Galloway, the central belt, Fife and Perthshire, to Braemar in Aberdeenshire, causing most trouble in Tranent, East Lothian. Crowds demanded the destruction of ballot lists by those who held them (mainly schoolmasters and Deputy Lieutenants), protesting against the narrow age band affected by it (thus involving a great proportion of economically crucial young men), against the concept of a ballot rather than voluntary service and against misconceived notions that militiamen might be sent on foreign service or even sold as slaves.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.27-8; Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland, 1780-1815* (Edinburgh, 1979), pp. 117-20; PRO HO 42/24, ff.549-50, Joseph Balmer to Robert Burdon, MP, 18 February 1793; the *Sun*, 28 February 1793; PRO HO 42/25, f.110, printed notice offering a reward for information leading to the conviction of rioters. See also PRO HO 42/24, f.356, for a handbill from Newcastle trying to dissuade potential sailors from being lured into the navy by the bounty a few days before the French declaration of war was known in Britain.

¹¹⁰ Stevenson, 'The London "Crimp" Riots', 40-58.

¹¹¹ Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland*, pp.121-3; PRO HO 42/34, ff.277-9, John Lloyd to Portland, 1 April 1795; *ibid.*, ff.302-v., G. Armytage and others to Portland, 6 April 1796.

¹¹² Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland*, p.78; Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.173.

¹¹³ Minto (ed.), *Life and Letters*, ii, 415-7, Elliot to Lady Palmerston, 28 August 1797; Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland*, pp.75-115. On the Tranent anti-militia riot, see Kenneth J. Logue, 'The Tranent Militia Riot of 1797', *Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists' Society*, 14 (1974), 37-61; Sandy Mullay, *Scotland's Forgotten Massacre* (Edinburgh, 1979). See also Buddle Atkinson and Jackson (eds.), *Letters to James Loch*, i, 21, Andrew Clephane to James Loch, 15 May 1798.

Furthermore, soldiers and sailors themselves sometimes showed a marked disloyalty instead of support for the war. The naval mutinies of April - June 1797 at Sheerness and the Nore were only the largest and most famous examples of this.¹¹⁴ Lord St. Vincent complained to Evan Nepean at the Home Office in February 1800 of the lack of discipline still lingering in his fleet: 'The state of the Navy is so bad, that I begin to despair of setting it to rights, for the moment any Ship of the old Leaven is out of my sight, both officers and Crews are as bad as ever, & no-one attempts to correct them...In short my dear Nepean, it is high time to make peace...'.¹¹⁵ Some militiamen who had previously volunteered their services for Ireland fought shy when the time of departure arrived.¹¹⁶ Instead of restoring order, Volunteers in Dingwall and Peterhead in 1796 and in Macduff and Devonshire in 1800 joined in local meal riots; in Honiton and Cullompton in 1795 and in Teignmouth in 1797, Volunteers refused act against food rioters. Regular troops had joined in food riots in the south of England in 1794-5, but generally these soldiers did not refuse to suppress riots, probably because they themselves were not local to their areas of action, as were Volunteers.¹¹⁷ Soldiers and sailors might of course simply dislike the loneliness and hardships of war. Samuel Grant, ship's clerk, wrote in his diary in December 1793, 'This has not been one of the happiest years of my life—having been nearly 9 Months of it absent f[ro]m My Dear Wife & Children...& 4 Months in a very ill state of health'. The following year was not a great deal better: 'had various alterations and disappointments with regard to the situation of my ship—but, *most particularly*, disappointed in going home when reduced almost to a certainty'.¹¹⁸

As with the loyal addresses, it seems likely that the peace petitions of 1795, 1797, and 1801 were signed by non-partisans, simply because of the numbers of local people involved—the Yorkshire petition of 1801 bore 30 000 signatures.¹¹⁹ Moreover, petitions for peace were not sent only at times of mass campaigns: the merchants, manufacturers and traders of Paisley, for instance, petitioned the King against the 'present unhappy & ruinous war' which was 'the source of all [their] unsupportable miseries' in January 1794. Hopes for peace were also expressed in

¹¹⁴ For the sailors' requests concerning wages, supplies, provisions and medical care, see *P.H.*, xxxiii, 493-501 n.; see also Wells, *Insurrection*, pp.81-3, 95-6, 100-2. See Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country*, p.44, on sailors' riots in November 1792 at Great Yarmouth, South Shields, King's Lynn and Ipswich. On army disaffection, see Wells, *Insurrection*, pp.104-6.

¹¹⁵ NMM, NEP/6, ff.3-v., St. Vincent to Nepean, 7 February 1800.

¹¹⁶ Aspinall, *LCGIII*, iii, 123, Portland to George III, 12 September 1798.

¹¹⁷ Logue, *Popular Disturbances in Scotland*, pp.43-4; Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, pp.29, 49-50; Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.42-3; Wells, *Insurrection*, p.80; see also PRO HO 42/34, f.348, Archdeacon John Turner of Wells to Portland, 28 April 1795.

¹¹⁸ NMM, GRT/1-2.

¹¹⁹ Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, pp.19, 152, 161, 190.

loyal addresses.¹²⁰ The caricaturists sometimes reflected literate opinion that the government's handling of the 1796-7 negotiations might have been more skilful.¹²¹

Similarly, on the news of peace being settled at Amiens, there was both widespread joy at the end of the war and criticism of its terms. Even at the signing of the preliminaries in October 1801, illuminations were ubiquitous, guns were fired and bells were rung in Manchester, the French diplomats Otto and General Lauriston were towed in their carriage from Downing Street to St. James's Square and back, and the price of wheat fell by ten shillings a quarter. David Erdman notes that 'A publican at Lambeth, who had vowed that whenever peace was made he would give away all the beer in his cellar, opened his barrels on the thirteenth [of October]'.¹²² The prospect of the end of the tax on incomes, of lower prices and of the reduction of the armed forces was very popular. Richard Westall wrote to his friend Matthew Flinders, a sailor: 'I remember when I had the pleasure of seeing you at Spithead, you lamented that in your profession, distinction was scarce ever to be obtained but by the destruction of our fellow creatures: you will therefore have rejoiced that long harassed Europe is at length at Peace.'¹²³ Approval was not unanimous, however. 'I am told,' Thomas Grenville told his brother, the former Foreign Secretary, 'that though the word peace be popular amongst the lowest classes, yet amongst persons of all descriptions who affect to reason upon the articles, they are considered as a confession of our defeat.'¹²⁴ Mr. Custance, the most influential property-owner in Parson Woodforde's area in Norfolk, refused to allow public celebrations of the settlement in June 1802.¹²⁵ Napoleon became the hero of the hour, while Pitt, though

¹²⁰ PRO HO 42/28, ff.115-8; Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution', p.50.

¹²¹ BMC 8829, [Cruikshank], 'The Messenger of Peace' (29 October 1796); *ibid.*, 8832, Cruikshank, 'Lord Mum Sucking his Thumb!!' (10 November 1796); *ibid.*, 9031, [Ansell], 'The Diplomatic Squad, or Harmony Interrupted' (21 August 1797).

¹²² Ziegler, *Addington*, p.127; Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.137; Johnson (ed.), *Diary of John Carrington*, 65, 71, 7 October 1801, 30 March 1802; Erdman, *Blake*, p.358. See also BMC 9727, Woodward, 'John Bull's First Intelligence of Peace!!' (6 October 1801); *ibid.*, 9848, [Williams], 'The Peace Soup Shop' (29 March 1802); *ibid.*, 9853, Woodward and Roberts, 'The Arrival of the Definitive Treaty, or John Bull's Welcome to Peace' ([April 1802]).

¹²³ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, pp.93-5; NMM, FLI/1, Richard Westall to Matthew Flinders, 13 March 1802. See also NMM, GRT/9-10, 19 September 1801, 5, 8, 9 October 1801, 15 March 1802, 29-30 April 1802, for a purser's longing for peace to be concluded. For public anticipation of renewed or superior prosperity, see BMC 9730, [Woodward and Rowlandson], 'John Bull in the Year 1800! John Bull in the Year 1801!' (12 October 1801); *ibid.*, 9731, Woodward and Roberts, 'Old Friends with New Faces, or Welcome Visitors to John Bull' ([October 1801]); *ibid.*, 9732, [Williams], 'John Bull visited with the Blessings of Peace' (21 October 1801); *ibid.*, 9734, [Williams], 'A Meeting of Monopolizers, or the Good Effect of Peace' (28 October 1801); *ibid.*, 9850, Woodward and Roberts, 'John Bull and his Friends Commemorating the Peace' ([March 1802]); *ibid.*, 9851, 'John Bull and his Friends Welcoming Home the Definitive Treaty!' ([April 1802]).

¹²⁴ *Dropmore*, vii, 64, Thomas Grenville to Grenville, 22 October 1801. See also Malmesbury, *Diaries and Correspondence*, iv??, 60, 1 October 1801.

¹²⁵ Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, v, 391, 1 June 1802.

now out of office, was unpopular and regarded as having been the stubborn obstacle to peace throughout the decade. This was reflected in the prints. In 'John Bull's Prayer to Peace, or the Flight of Discord', Roberts showed Napoleon exalted to the clouds and glorified together with Peace, while Pitt, the demon of discord, fled in terror and disarray.¹²⁶

Popular antipathy to the war against revolutionary France probably took even less account of the reasons for the conflict than did popular support for it. The war was opposed by public opinion largely because of the strains and stresses it imposed on the population in common with all wars. It was perhaps particularly odious to the people because it affected such a wide cross-section of them, because it was so long and because it demanded so much in terms of human and material resources, but these were differences of degree and not of kind from other eighteenth-century conflicts, and the connection was not often made between these in popular opposition to this war.

IV

Public opinion was, by its very nature, not entirely committed to one cause or the other over the whole period of the 1790s—neither actively promoting the war nor actively campaigning against it. Its acquiescence and submission throughout allowed the government to pursue the policy of war, but at certain times it appeared to be more favourable than at others. The outbreak of war was quite widely popular, after the alarmism of late 1792 and the execution of Louis XVI; as the war wore on and the economic pressures of the decade squeezed more tightly, popular hostility increased; when French intransigence was revealed in 1796 and 1797, and when British troops or fleets were victorious in 1798, public patience with the war was restored; but peace in 1802 was almost universally welcomed. It would, however, be an oversimplification to imagine that everyone had an opinion or strong feelings about the

¹²⁶ BMC 9737, Roberts, 'John Bull's Prayer to Peace, or the Flight of Discord' ([1801]). See also *ibid.*, 9726, Gillray, 'Preliminaries of Peace!—or—John Bull and his Friends "Marching to Paris"' (6 October 1801); *ibid.*, 9733, [Williams], 'The Child and Champion of Jacobinism, New Christened' (26 October 1801); *ibid.*, 9738, [Williams], 'The Balance of Power' (1 December 1801); *ibid.*, 9839, [Williams], 'A Game at Chess' (9 January 1802); *ibid.*, 9841, Cruikshank, 'Roast Beef at Amiens' (20 January 1802); *ibid.*, [Williams], 'Cross Examination' (8 February 1802); *ibid.*, 9847, [Cruikshank], 'A Merry Go Round' (March 1802); *ibid.*, 9852, [Williams], 'Long Expected Come At Last or John Bull disappointed at his Crippled Visitor' (3 April 1802); *ibid.*, 9857, Woodward and Roberts, 'John Bull in Astonishment at the conduct of Old Friends' ([April 1802]); *ibid.*, 9866, 'The Consular Warehouse or a Great Man nail'd to the Counter!' (20 May 1802); *ibid.*, 9868, Woodward and Roberts, 'Mr and Mrs Bull Looking Over Their Accounts' ([May 1802]).

struggle all of the time, and it seems much more likely that most British people were open to persuasion for much of the time.¹²⁷

The work of the graphic satirists in the 1790s reflects the floating nature of public opinion. There were no government engravers to give a falsely optimistic view of the British military situation for public consumption, as there were in France.¹²⁸ Kate Watson has made the point that the graphic prints produced by Gillray and other satirical artists were highly ambiguous, sometimes portraying Fox as a bumbling and oafish fool, conniving with the French enemy, yet sometimes attacking Pitt and the King and Queen as threatening and even demonic figures. 'These vicious, yet imaginative portrayals of the British elite were so powerful...that the French Revolutionary artist and politician, Jacques-Louis David, adopted them as models for his own propaganda campaign against the British government.'¹²⁹ This ambiguity not only reflected the market for prints, and thus changes in public opinion on the war through the decade, but also perhaps, in the case of Gillray at least, the artist's own political thinking. His role in the loyalist propaganda campaign is not clear, but he did work for a while from December 1797 for the *Anti-Jacobin Magazine and Review*, under Canning, for an annual pension of £200. This seems to have been in line with his ideological standpoint, because of his disillusionment with the French Revolution especially after the rise of Napoleon, in common with many, yet he retained a mind of his own and could not be relied upon to ply the government with constant support—indeed, the savagery of his satire was feared by government and radicals alike, even when he was employed by the government.¹³⁰ Many prints, therefore, were double-edged, such as Gillray's 'Opening the Budget;—or—John Bull giving his Breeches to save his Bacon' (1796), which showed Pitt scaring John Bull into paying extra taxes to defend the country against a rumoured invasion, but also Fox beckoning the French over.¹³¹ Other graphic prints appeared to show neither approval nor disapproval of

¹²⁷ John Bohstedt notes that parliamentary elections in Norwich in the 1790s and early 1800s could be taken as rough referenda on the war and its impact on the town (*Riots and Community Politics*, p.204), indicating the fluctuating nature of public opinion on the conflict.

¹²⁸ George (ed.), *Political and Personal Satires*, vii, p.xii.

¹²⁹ Kate Watson, 'Popular Loyalists: Subjects or Citizens? Case Study: Hannah More and James Gillray', unpublished paper given at the Colloquium on British Eighteenth-Century History, 1688-1832 in London (January 1993), p.4; see also A. Boime, 'Jacques-Louis David, Scatological Discourse in the French Revolution, and the Art of Caricature', in Lynne Hockman (ed.), *French Caricature and the French Revolution, 1789-1799* (University of California, 1989).

¹³⁰ Watson, 'Popular Loyalists: Subjects or Citizens?' p.5; Dickinson, *Caricatures and the Constitution*, p.16; George (ed.), *Political and Personal Satires*, vii, p.xiii.

¹³¹ BMC 8836, Gillray, 'Opening the Budget;—or—John Bull giving his Breeches to save his Bacon' (17 November 1796). See also *ibid.*, 8303, Gillray, 'A Smoking Club' (13 February 1793); *ibid.*, 8458, [Cruikshank], 'John Bull Humbugg'd alias Both-Ear'd' (12 May 1794); *ibid.*, 8599 & 8600, [Gillray], 'Ministerial Eloquence' and 'Opposition Eloquence' (6 January 1795); *ibid.*, 8837, [Cruikshank], 'The Budget or John Bull Frightened Out of his Wits' (20 November 1796); *ibid.*,

the war—they were not satirical, but simply portrayed British soldiers in their uniforms, or conveyed news of continental events.¹³²

Moreover, apparently pro-war activities engaged in by ordinary people were not necessarily motivated by pro-war sentiment. Earlier in the century Dr. Johnson had warned in *The False Alarm* (1770) of taking ‘public opinion’ at face value, citing various reasons why one might sign a petition other than conviction of its importance, such as to annoy the authorities or to prove one’s literacy.¹³³ Mark Philp issues a similar caution concerning the efficacy of the *Cheap Repository Tracts*, suggesting that it is more likely that they were ‘taken as entertainment than as gospel’¹³⁴—though it should be remembered that entertainment can be extremely influential. Certainly, even some who were loyalist in sympathy thought that the government’s alarmism in late 1792, for example, was unnecessary or exaggerated. ‘A great alarm is gone abroad in this country of danger to the State, more than there is I think sufficient ground for,’ wrote Edward Law to his brother, the Bishop of Elphin. Dr. John Symonds told Arthur Young that Sir Henry Moncrieff-Wellwood and Dr. Thomas Hardy, luminaries of the Church of Scotland, had ‘laughed at Dundas’s account of the political riots in Scotland. They absolutely denied the existence of them—considered them as political; and when you read Hardy’s pamphlet [*The Patriot*, (1793)], you will see that he would not have failed setting them forth if they had deserved any consideration.’¹³⁵ Donald Ginter concluded that the Loyal Associations of 1792-3 ‘were so effective’, that is, attracted such a heterogeneous membership, ‘as to be a most unreliable gauge of public opinion’.¹³⁶

Recruitment to the army or navy cannot necessarily be taken as a sign of sympathy with the war. Unemployed men were attracted by the offer of a paid job, prisoners by the chance of a life outside jail, poor men by the bounty, and some, like Parson Woodforde’s boy, by the glamour they imagined to distinguish the military or naval life. Although sailors might occasionally receive a small share of prize-money,

8995, Gillray, ‘Midas, Transmitting all into Paper’ (9 March 1797); *ibid.*, 9241, [Ansell], ‘Anticipation—Ways and Means—or Buonaparte really taken!!’ (13 August 1798); *ibid.*, 9416, Woodward, ‘Political Hoaxing!!’ (1 October 1799).

¹³² BMC 8124, [Cruikshank], ‘Bobadil Disgraced or Kate in a rage’ (October 1792); *ibid.*, 8731, Kay, ‘Military Promenade’ (1795); *ibid.*, 8828, Gillray, ‘Glorious Reception of the Ambassador of Peace, on his Entry into Paris’ (28 October 1796); *ibid.*, 9238, Rowlandson, ‘The Light Horse Volunteers of London and Westminster’ (5 July 1798); *ibid.*, 9809, Woodward, ‘A Negotiation for a Piece!!!’ ([October 1801]); *ibid.*, 9864, [Williams], ‘A Trip to Paris or John Bull and his Spouse invited to the Honors of the Sitting!’ (14 May 1802).

¹³³ See Gunn, *Beyond Liberty and Property*, p.278.

¹³⁴ Philp, ‘The Fragmented Ideology of Reform’, p.70.

¹³⁵ PRO 30/12/17/2, f.106, Edward Law to John Law, 12 November 1792; M. Bentham-Edwards, *The Autobiography of Arthur Young with Selections from his Correspondence* (London, 1898), p.238, Dr. John Symonds to Young, 8 April 1793.

¹³⁶ Ginter, ‘The Loyalist Association Movement’, p.187.

there was little else to offer rank-and-file military and naval recruits much hope of reward: ordinary soldiers were not awarded government medals for bravery until Waterloo.¹³⁷ One wonders if some joined the army simply because it licensed violence—some of the worst domestic violence, Marilyn Morris notes, involved soldiers in theatres attacking members of audiences who refused to remove their hats when the national anthem was played.¹³⁸ Some also offered their services to the Volunteers because they were unemployed, or because of pressure from landlords or employers. Another powerful attraction of Volunteer service, which was limited to action within one's home locality, was its privilege of exemption from the militia ballot. Linda Colley has suggested that it also represented an opportunity to improve business: many who joined the local corps were shopkeepers or tradesmen who were aware that their fellow-Volunteers were potential customers.¹³⁹ Others were unwilling to volunteer, but claimed that should a real invasion occur, they would be active in helping to resist it.¹⁴⁰ Professional officers might care only about the war as a stage in their careers, or for its impact on the army or navy as a whole. Sir Ralph Abercromby, according to Piers Mackesy, 'was not ideologically committed to the struggle. He cared deeply for the reputation of the British army; but he did not share the singleminded hatred of the French Revolution which pervaded the ruling classes', and he did not believe that opinions could be controlled by force.¹⁴¹

Many may have participated in popular celebrations of British victories more for the fun and excitement of the occasion than from any real sentiments of support for the war. Effigies of Pitt were burned on twenty of the London bonfires set ablaze in honour of Duncan's victory at Camperdown in 1797. Cruikshank's graphic print 'The Victorious Procession to St. Paul's' (1797), highlighted the burden of taxation imposed on ordinary people and the difficulty they would find in celebrating naval victories in their straitened circumstances. Bohstedt points out that attacks on Dissenters or radicals who failed to illuminate their windows during victory celebrations were less motivated by political loyalty than by a desire to punish nonconformity.¹⁴² Similarly, activities which might have given the appearance of

¹³⁷ Beresford (ed.), *Diary of a Country Parson*, iv, 276, 10 May 1796; Harvey, *English Literature*, p.130. See also the requests for military patronage in PRO HO 42/25, ff.753-v., John Alexander MacDowell to Dundas, 14 October 1793; *ibid.*, 42/30, ff.129-v., William Maxwell (a prisoner in the King's Bench Prison) to Dundas, 19 May 1794.

¹³⁸ Morris, 'The Monarchy as an Issue', pp.267-8.

¹³⁹ Colley, *Britons*, pp.300-2.

¹⁴⁰ Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.74.

¹⁴¹ Mackesy, *Statesmen at War*, p.138.

¹⁴² Emsley, *British Society and the French Wars*, p.27; Wells, 'English Society and Revolutionary Politics', p.209; BMC 9046, Cruikshank, 'The Victorious Procession to St. Paul's, or Billy's Grand Triumphal Entry a Prelude' (11 December 1797); Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.24.

hostility to the war were not always influenced by anti-war sentiment. The fascination which Napoleon held for many in Britain in the late 1790s did not necessarily imply sympathy with his country's cause in the war or hostility to Britain's. A poem published anonymously in 1799, simply entitled 'Buonaparte', narrated the French general's military adventures to date and poked gentle fun at those who enjoyed gossip about his personal life. It ended with a note:

The verses upon this renowned chief were written before he had assumed the new part which he is now playing in the political drama of the French Revolution; and if our readers should relish his past history, as we have given it, we do not absolutely despair of his supplying them with further amusement.¹⁴³

Anxieties concerning trade and the scarcity of food at affordable prices were not necessarily vented in anger at the war, either. The Marquis of Lansdowne wrote to Admiral John Duckworth in December 1800:

Our own interior is sadly clouded, not by any apprehension from abroad, for the people seem still insensible to the state of foreign politics, but are dreadfully alive to apprehensions of scarcity and fear of Famine...¹⁴⁴

V

Graphic prints in the 1790s usually demonstrated the views of the literate classes of British society, but their general reflection of the divided, fluid and uncommitted nature of public opinion on the wars against revolutionary France may be said to provide an accurate picture of popular views throughout society below the governing elite. In the 1800s, when the threat of invasion was still more imminent, the grounds of war were much more clear-cut and comprehensible, and the figure of Napoleon could successfully be made into an easy target for popular antipathy (as opposed to the diverse and constantly changing governments of the French Republic during the 1790s), British public opinion became much more united and inflexible in support of the government and in virulent hostility to France.

The 1790s, however, saw constant variations in the public mood. Most people tended to respond to events as they happened, and particularly as they impinged upon their own lives, rather than to hold to one particular standpoint throughout the decade. The loud enthusiasm of February 1793 soon became subdued into resignation and fatalism in the face of economic hardship at home and military failure abroad.

¹⁴³ 'Buonaparte', in *The Meteors*, i (1799), 17-25, also printed in Bennett, *War Poetry*, pp.226-30.

¹⁴⁴ NMM, DUC/6, Lansdowne to Duckworth, 4 December 1800.

Victories temporarily rekindled morale in June 1794, October 1797 and August 1798, but while the government was given general public acquiescence in its conduct of the war, the public mood seems to have been one of resignation rather than of inspired and eager cooperation. The obscurity of the government's case against France in the 1790s made it much more difficult for them to carry public opinion with them than it would be in the 1800s, which was precisely Burke's charge against them. As John Ehrman notes, public loyalty and disaffection provided foils for each other throughout the decade—order for unrest, subversion for counter-propaganda, discipline and patriotism for desertion and mutiny, attacks on the King for thousands of loyal addresses addressing him with reverent affection. Loyalist and radical activity were simply two ends of the spectrum along which public opinion—including, perhaps, most loyalists and most radicals—shifted back and forth depending on external and private circumstances. John Dinwiddy has argued that circumstances were more important in the success obtained by conservative propagandists in the British debate over the French Revolution than the superiority of their arguments and ideology over the radical case.¹⁴⁵ Circumstances were probably very important in determining public opinion on the war at any given time in the decade, but they did not allow a clear judgement on the general pro-war / anti-war competition in the 1790s to the same extent as that on the Revolution debate, which was more clearly won by the conservatives.

¹⁴⁵ Dinwiddy, 'Interpretations of anti-Jacobinism', p.48.

Conclusion

The wars against revolutionary France provoked many very practical responses from the British people. Economic, political or personal gain or loss (or their prospect) naturally determined the views of probably the majority of the population. Pittites, conservative Whigs and loyalists, by and large, did well politically out of the war. Pitt himself resigned in 1801, taking with him a substantial part of his Cabinet; but he did not go because of unpopularity caused by the war. Rather, he resigned over the substantially unrelated issue of Roman Catholic emancipation, on which he disagreed with the King, and probably also because his health was suffering badly from the long and heavy strain of conducting the British war effort. He was back in power in 1804, and he remained there until his death in 1806. The Foxites and the radicals tried hard to make political capital from the conflict, but they usually failed dismally. Instead of heaping opprobrium on the government, they more often succeeded in bringing it on themselves by making themselves vulnerable to the charge of support for the French armies and disloyalty to their own country. Most people probably made up their minds on the war according to how it personally affected them, economically or otherwise. Businesses flourished or withered; commerce prospered or was stunted; employment in individual trades expanded or contracted; prices rose or fell. Many were wounded or bereaved; some made their careers and some found fame. Most of those who lived on the south coast favoured the strengthening of the British defences against a French invasion attempt; many throughout the country were outraged by the activities of crimps and press-gangs.

Nevertheless, there was also a lively debate on many more ideological issues raised by the war throughout the 1790s, and this determined the attitudes of a minority to the conflict, notably Edmund Burke and the war crusaders, the government, the radicals at the start of the war and the Friends of Peace. It also perhaps helped to shape the views of many others, such as Fox and some of his supporters, the radicals after 1793 and the loyalists, for all of whom the war was secondary to their first ambition or loyalty. The legitimacy of the war was debated heatedly throughout the decade, on moral, religious and political grounds. Was war ever to be justified? Could military hostility to a set of opinions be morally permissible? Was an armed conflict against the French Revolution desirable, and had it been provoked or not? The necessity of the war was argued as vigorously, in terms of politics, the economy, commerce, religion, and military and strategic interests. Thirdly, the aims of the war were discussed. Should Britain be fighting to obtain territory in Europe, or new colonies elsewhere? Was the defeat of the French Revolution necessary, or would a

change of the French government prove sufficient? Was it morally justifiable to pursue either of these latter objectives? Was the government really waging war abroad at least partly in order to suppress British civil liberty at home? Opinion also varied, therefore, on the nature of the conflict, whether it was purely territorial or partially or fully ideological, and whether it was defensive or aggressive. In a war on such a large scale, materially, geographically and temporally, it was inevitable that many opinions would be held concerning its conduct. Many views were aired on whether it would best be fought mainly by the navy or by the army in conjunction with the allied armies, and on whether Britain should concentrate its efforts in the colonies, in the Mediterranean, on the continent or within France itself. The desirability of the involvement of women and of the lower classes in the British war effort was also discussed and, where favourably, to what extent and in what roles. Finally, peace was a constant topic of controversy. When could it be safe to treat with the revolutionary rulers of France, if ever? What, indeed, would constitute peace? What conditions ought Britain to demand, and what concessions, if any, should it yield?

While Britain clearly entered the war because of a pragmatic care for strategic British interests, the British government was also substantially influenced in its entry into hostilities by its attitude to the French Revolution, especially to the revolutionary foreign policy which encroached on British interests and which defied the acceptable and traditional conduct of international relations. In the same way, while naturally the British people held many pragmatic attitudes to the conflict, the division of British opinions on the war was also produced by the French Revolution and their differing views on that. Some people's views on the Revolution were to an extent shaped by the war, but the British battle-lines over the French Revolution had largely been drawn before the outbreak of war in February 1793 and they remained little altered by it in the 1790s. While it seems likely that ordinary people were less influenced by the ideological issues surrounding the conflict than by its practical impact on them, the nature of the printed controversy over the war and its close relation to the debate on the French Revolution suggests that, in the 1790s, literate British opinion perceived the role of political ideology in the wars against revolutionary France to be significant, perhaps even crucial.

Edmund Burke's views on the conflict were clearly born of his analysis of the French Revolution: having determined that the Revolution was a menace to the British constitution and to the political, social, religious and moral order of all Europe, he was convinced that it must be destroyed militarily by defeating its armies and restoring the pre-revolutionary government and social order of France as well as by exposing its doctrines as deceptive, false and wicked. This, to Burke, was the whole purpose of

the war, and any diversification of British aims was a boost to the enemy cause. The British government, by the nature of its role, had to pay more attention to strategic and economic realities than did Burke, and it was less preoccupied by the truth or falsehood of revolutionary principles in the abstract. Only a few ministers pressed for the objective of overthrowing the French revolutionary government to be accepted, let alone that of replacing it with a restored Bourbon monarchy. Nevertheless, all ministers were very aware of the danger of these principles becoming popular in Britain and they made strenuous efforts to help ensure that they did not; moreover, they recognized that the French foreign policy, and its conduct, which antagonized them to the point of warfare and which prevented them from negotiating before 1796 and between 1798-1801, emanated from revolutionary administration of French affairs. Crusading commentators and pamphleteers sympathized with Burke's views and placed a corresponding importance on ideological hostility, though they were less rigid in their insistence upon it than was Burke. Loyalists' views were coloured by similar thinking, but they were more concerned to defend the government and its actions than were the crusaders and they were therefore less tied to ideological warfare and more ready to contemplate and even to support traditional colonial, maritime and continental objectives and strategies. They were also considerably more willing to accept the necessity of peace negotiations, for the sake of a war-weary nation, before the Revolution in France could be said to have been overthrown.

The attitudes of radical politicians to the conflict were, like Burke's, clearly determined by their opinion of the French Revolution. Their sympathy for the Revolution and their disgust with the British constitution caused them to oppose vigorously a war which appeared to be waged for the purpose of crushing the republican government they so admired. As the war wore on, however, they increasingly also tried to enlist discontent with war-time conditions to their own cause of opposition to the government and, more fundamentally, hostility to the current political system in Britain. Thus, the war became more important to them as a means of stirring up discontent than as a primary object of contention. Fox and his supporters also opposed the war because they sympathized with the French Revolutionary cause, but they, perhaps even more than the radicals, were also concerned to make use of the war to criticize the government, and ultimately that was more important to them than support for the French. The Friends of Peace agreed that military opposition to political or religious opinions was wrong, but they were more anxious to attack the conflict because it was a war at all than because it was a war fought against the French Revolution. Some churchmen and some women, the politically literate and interested, aligned themselves with one or other of these

stances. Others did not and, like the majority of the ordinary people in general, their attitudes were probably shaped more by the ways in which the war directly impinged on their lives than by the debates on the French Revolution and the war.

This view, that literate opinion in Britain understood the role of political ideology in the wars against revolutionary France to be at least significant, if not crucial, is borne out by contrasting the 1790s with a projection into the following decade of Napoleonic warfare. The Peace of Amiens collapsed in May 1803 after it had become clear that Napoleon had no intention of halting his pursuit of continental hegemony. Britain demanded control of Malta to balance growing French influence in Switzerland and northern Italy, and eventually replied to continued French refusals with a declaration of war.¹ From this time until the end of the war in 1815, British society displayed a much greater degree of unity in support of the conflict than had been the case in the 1790s.

Some British radicals continued to admire Napoleon as a 'son of the Revolution', but the majority of the population associated him with military despotism and aggression.² France no longer defended 'French principles' of democracy or republicanism, nor hid behind such a claim, but seemed to lust shamelessly after territorial power and control, eyeing greedily even Britain. Some liberal opponents of the war had already renounced their support of the French in the late 1790s in favour of the British war effort; with the advent of the threat of Napoleon's 'Army of England', many more who had been hostile to the war, or who had been uncommitted to supporting or opposing it, came to favour the war effort against France. After the failure of his invasion attempt had been sealed at Trafalgar, Napoleon's attempts to paralyze Britain economically by a blockade of continental Europe against British commerce hardened many others against him. The case for a defensive war appeared to be much more persuasive, and even those who continued to oppose Britain's involvement in the conflict, such as the Friends of Peace, might be persuaded to participate in defensive measures in such crises as the invasion scare of 1803-5. The war against Napoleon was thus much more popular than the conflict against the French Revolution had been. Resistance to recruiting diminished, as did radical criticism of the government.³

Opposition to the war in the 1800s was rarely caused by ideological sympathy for the French government or cause. The Friends of Peace continued to oppose it on grounds of religion and morality, but they were also much more successful than they

¹ Ian R. Christie, *Wars and Revolutions: Britain 1760-1815* (London, 1982), pp.259-60.

² Emsley, 'Revolution, War and the Nation-State', p.116; Dickinson, *British Radicalism and the French Revolution*, p.64.

³ Bohstedt, *Riots and Community Politics*, p.19.

had been in the 1790s in harnessing the economic discontent of industrial and manufacturing interests, in the north and Midlands of England particularly. One of their most effective campaigns was organized against the British reply to Napoleon's Continental System of 1806, the Orders in Council of January and November - December 1807, which blockaded all European ports from which British ships were excluded and forced all neutral shipping to the blockaded ports to pass through British ports first, and to pay transit duties there. Provincial merchants and manufacturers who dealt with America were enraged by the actual and potential damage done to their trade by foreign resentment caused by these measures, and they signed long petitions, organized by the Friends of Peace in 1808 and in 1811-12, in protest. In 1812 the government, in the political chaos caused by Spencer Perceval's assassination, but also under the pressure of a mass of petitions and the likelihood of war with America, repealed the Orders in Council.⁴

An interesting study could be made of British attitudes to the Napoleonic wars of 1803-1815; it seems that support for and opposition to the conflict was rarely based on political-ideological sympathies and usually on defensive or economic interests. General public opinion in the 1790s was moved by similar considerations, but there is also substantial evidence of a debate for and against the war in that decade which was motivated by political opposition to and sympathy for the revolutionary regime in France.

⁴ See Cookson, *Friends of Peace*, pp.215-229; B.H. Tolley, 'The Liverpool Campaign Against the Orders in Council and the War of 1812', in J.R. Harris (ed.), *Liverpool and Merseyside* (London, 1969), pp.98-146; D.J. Moss, 'Birmingham and the Campaigns Against the Orders in Council and East India Company Charter, 1812-1813', *Canadian Journal of History*, xiv (1976), 173-188.

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